

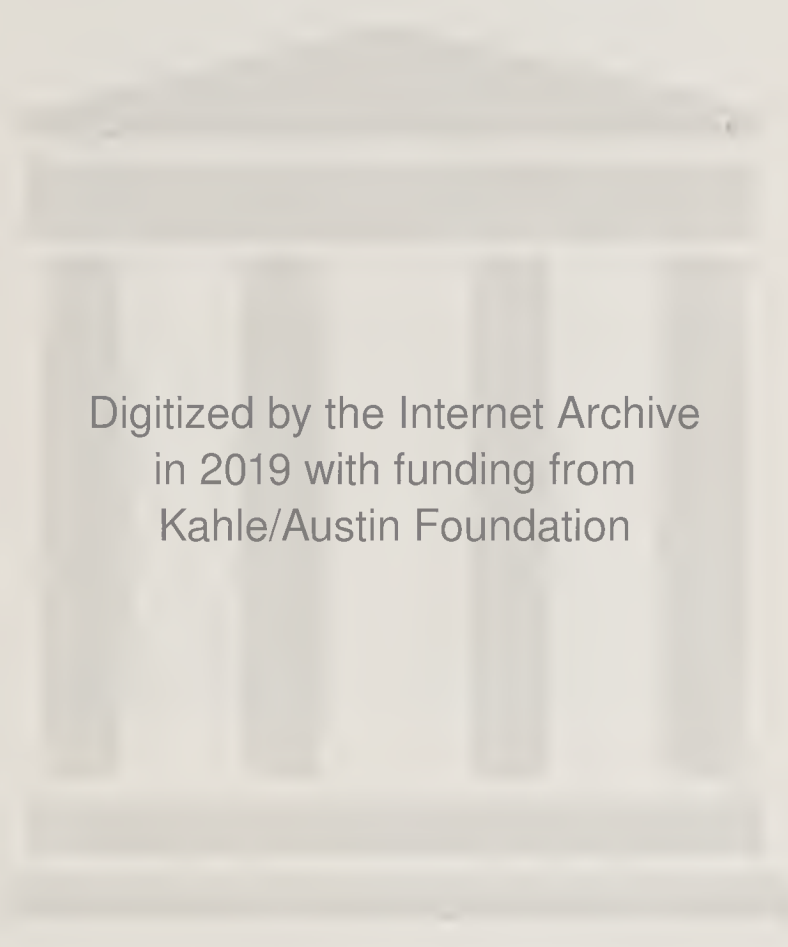
MID SNOW AND ICE

THE APOSTLES OF THE NORTH-WEST

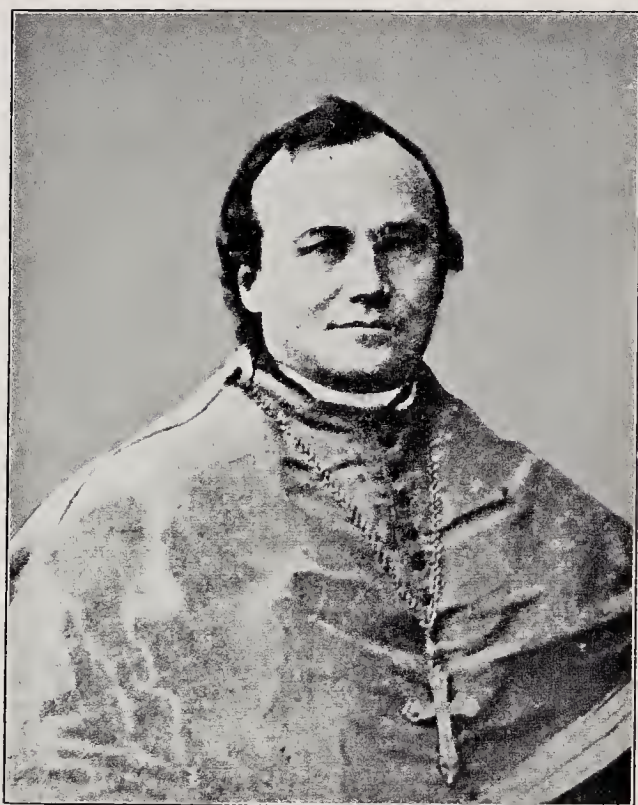


J. Schumann
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MID SNOW AND ICE



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MGR. TACHÉ

Frontispiece

MID SNOW AND ICE

THE APOSTLES OF THE NORTH-WEST

BY THE REVEREND P. DUCHAUSSOIS, O.M.I.

AUTHOR OF "THE GREY NUNS IN THE FAR NORTH"

WITH PORTRAITS AND MANY OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

"O my Jesus, I die happy, since I have seen the Sacred
Standard of Thy Cross lifted up at the very ends of the earth."—
FATHER GROLLIER, aged 38, dying at Fort Good Hope, near
the Arctic Circle, May, 1864.

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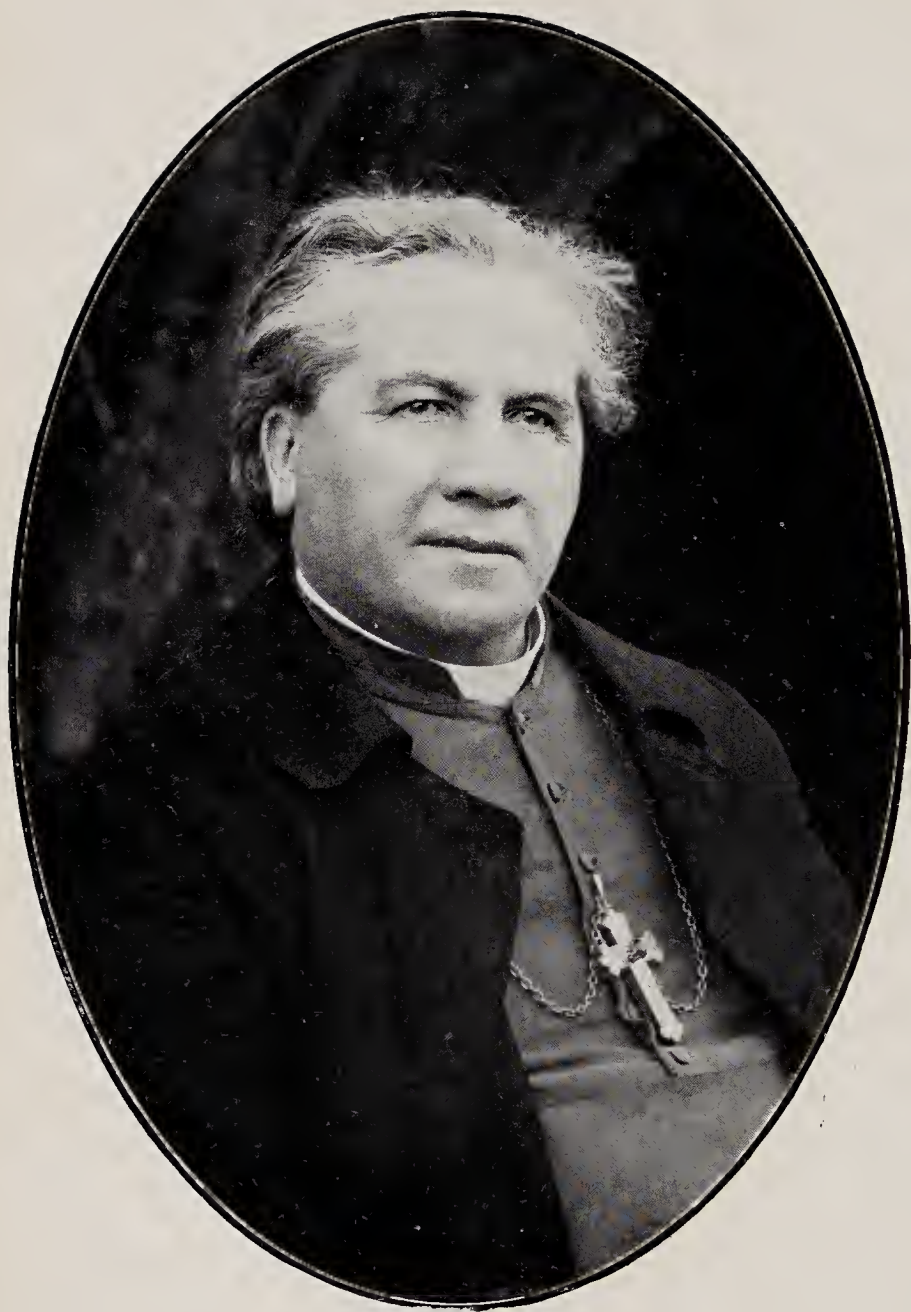
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NIHIL OBSTAT:
INNOCENTIUS APAP, S.Th.M., O.P.
Censor deputatus.

IMPRIMATUR:
EDM. CAN. SURMONT,
Vicarius generalis.

WESTMONASTERII,
die 3^a Septembris, 1923.

Made and Printed in Great Britain



ARCHBISHOP DONTENWILL, O.M.I.

To face p. v

INTRODUCTION

THE Rev. P. A. Fournet, priest of the Society of St Sulpice, writes in his article on Canada in the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* : "The Oblates of Mary Immaculate are the apostles of the North-West" (239a). Those devoted pioneer missionary priests are not sufficiently known, even to their Catholic brethren throughout the world. "Hid are the saints of God ; hid are the world's benefactors," says Cardinal Newman. Father Fournet, who is a professor in the Collège de Montréal, and is no doubt himself a Canadian, says that the Oblates of Mary Immaculate repeated in the nineteenth century the missionary successes of the Society of Jesus in the seventeenth (236a). This eulogy must sound strangely unfamiliar to most readers. It is true that Mgr. Taché, first Archbishop of St Boniface (and Winnipeg), wrote some small books about the North-West and its missions, and his own struggles on behalf of Christian education. And Dom Benoit, Superior of the Canons Regular of the Immaculate Conception, wrote *con amore* his *Vie de Mgr. Taché* (Beauchemin, Montreal, 1904). Father Jonquet also published in 1904 *Mgr. Grandin, O.M.I., Premier Évêque de St Albert* (20, Rue St Vincent, Montreal). In 1910, again, Father Morice published the *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada* (Musson Company, Toronto), a work showing much research, going back to 1659, a work which must remain invaluable as a book of reference, whilst it is as readable as any tale of travel or adventure. Father Morice, in writing, had the advantage of being at the same time an author of distinction, and a missionary of much experience in the extreme West. Another work which assuredly made the Oblate Missions well known, especially to readers outside the Church, was the *Blackrobe Voyageur* (Moffat and Yard, New York, 1911), a delightful Life of Father Lacombe, by Miss Katherine Hughes, whose exceptional talent and experience, as well as her personal friendship with the old missionary, made her his ideal biographer. Yet these various volumes of undoubted worth have not been widely spread in all circles in which they ought to be welcomed. A Jesuit Father in Canada, reviewing in

February, 1922, *Aux Glaces Polaires*, wrote that the work of the Oblate Fathers in the West, "forming one of the grandest pages in the history of Christian missions, and manifesting not mere occasional heroic acts, but heroism day by day, and lasting to the end, remains *inconnue ou méconnue*."

For such good reasons, therefore, there has been of late a wish in many quarters to bring home to the hearts of the people the amazing heroism, and the no less amazing success, of the priests and nuns in the North-West and the Far North. A few years ago Father Duchaussois, at the request and with the assistance of Bishop Gabriel Breynat, of the Mackenzie Vicariate, wrote the inspiring story of *The Grey Nuns in the Far North, 1867-1917* (McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1919). The original and French version was published at 390, Guy Street, Montreal. The author of that small but interesting volume had indeed the same difficulties as his predecessors, because so little record was ever kept of the work done or the hardships endured by the priests and nuns who had gone away into the lone lands of snow and ice. For various reasons the missionaries had written very little. They were too busy and too over-worked. They were making long journeys on snow-shoes or in dog-sleds; they were seeking a scanty subsistence (perhaps for Indian orphan children as well as for themselves) from frozen lakes and woods; they were sleeping, or trying to sleep, under the canopy of heaven in a dug-out of the deep snow. One of the pioneer missionaries, Mgr. Grandin, did indeed keep some sort of journal. But his biographer has to lament that the most interesting portion of his writings perished in a destructive fire at the Native Mission of Ile à la Crosse in Northern Saskatchewan. And most of the missionaries of necessity handled the spade and the saw rather than the pen. However, the Grey Nuns' chronicler, carrying his pen and ink, imitated the courage of his predecessors so far as to follow their trails and tracks even to the inhospitable shores of Great Slave Lake and the broad Mackenzie. Under the guidance of Bishop Breynat he made acquaintance with the canoe and the barge, the racquet and the sled, the tent and the log cabin, the pemmican and the frozen (or rotten) fish. He travelled and he rested, being dispensed from the ordinary priestly duties, and left free to observe and to take notes. This worthy "chiel," having in due course printed his notes and having presented to the world a faithful picture of those heroic nuns, who are a great glory of the Church, has looked

for still further experience and further mission records in order to make known also the laborious self-sacrificing lives of his Oblate brethren who assist and guide the nuns. His French-Canadian friends say that his volume, *Les Sœurs Grises*, has had *un beau succès*, and the same may be said of the Toronto or English version. Father Duchaussois, therefore, has thought that his new volume, *Aux Glaces Polaires : Indiens et Esquimaux*, may meet with a similar welcome. It has been published by the Association of Mary Immaculate (4, Rue Antoinette, Paris; 39, Quai Gailleton, Lyons) for the benefit of the Mackenzie Missions, and it has received from the French Academy the Prix Montyon. The English version of this book is presented in the following pages. These pages are concerned with only a portion of what Father Fournet means by the North-West. But it will be followed, we hope, by another volume devoted to the remainder of the same great territory, a territory which in Church history means the first ecclesiastical province of St. Boniface—viz., the various missions of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate collected into one (1871), and spreading from the Lake of the Woods (Ontario) to the Pacific, and from the United States border to the Farthest North. The purpose of the present volume is set forth in the following dedicatory letter to the Most Reverend Doctor Dontenwill, Titular Archbishop of Ptolemais in Syria, Assistant at the Pontifical Throne, Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate:

MY LORD ARCHBISHOP AND MOST REVEREND
FATHER GENERAL,

I have finished the book which you desired me to write. Perhaps this little monument of an apostleship which has now lasted for seventy-five years is appearing at an opportune moment, because—in the Mackenzie Vicariate, at least—no other priest has yet appeared except the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

I went, as you wished, to see for myself the men and the missions whose circumstances I have now tried to describe. If I met any hardship by flood or field, it was shared by my cheerful and venerated mentor, Mgr. Breynat. Wherever we passed, from Lake Athabaska to the near approaches of the Arctic Circle, I was edified to find one of your spiritual sons—this one a grey beard, from having rolled so long in the snow, he would say; that other a new arrival from one of the scholasticates—all serving the Lord in joy of heart far away from all human comfort. Only one of them was

I unable to see. At Fort Simpson, at the meeting of the waters of the Mackenzie and the Liard, it had been quite arranged with Father Vacher that the Bishop would visit St Raphael's Mission at Fort Liard, starting by dog-sled from Great Slave Lake, and remaining at the mission until the melting of the ice on the Liard River. We were just ready for our journey in the spring of 1916 when a letter from Father Vacher reached the Bishop, four months after date, begging him not to come, because the fishing season had been a failure, and the chase had brought in nothing, and the potatoes which had escaped the autumn frost would not suffice to feed us and our dogs even for one week.

My Lord, you told me to be brief—*Brevis esse laboravi*. It is easy to avoid praising the living, but when visiting so many graves of the "Missionaries of the Poor" in the land of snow and ice, I have found it very hard to have to shorten the Acts of those apostles of the primitive Church of the Far North. I hope, at least, that what I have written with sincere love of truth may remain. Those who come after me may go once more to my sources in the Mackenzie archives, and may enlarge what I have built up on a small and slender plan. I hope that my work, such as it is, picturing the priests and their primitive peoples, may be one more proof that the Church of Christ is, as Louis Veuillot said, a great *faiseuse d'hommes*, the efficient civilizer, able to league men and nations together in true fraternity and peace.

I am writing these concluding lines on the feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8, 1920) at St Albert, near the tomb of the venerated servant of God, Bishop Grandin. I will now go down into the crypt of the poor old cathedral of the North-West, and will place my manuscript bundle upon his tomb, and upon that of Father Lacombe, who rests beside him. A safe hand will then carry the parcel to Rome to offer it to Your Grace, and to beg your blessing upon the book and upon myself, your obedient and affectionate son in Jesus Christ and Mary Immaculate,

P. DUCHAUSSOIS, O.M.I.

The Superior General, writing to Father Duchaussois from Rome on February 17, 1921, the ninety-fifth anniversary of the approbation of the Religious Institute of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, congratulates him on his work, in which the Vicars Apostolic of Athabaska and Mackenzie have found a truthful history of what they themselves have

seen and heard and handled. Archbishop Dontenwill adds: "You have really been working in diamond mines, and I am happy to see that you have made a very good use of your opportunities. In these days of propaganda—not always on behalf of good causes—books like yours are of great importance. Our missionary Fathers have been too silent, too fond of the shade. Even they themselves, however, will surely be gratified if your words are spread widely abroad, and especially among all young people who are generous enough to think of serving God in a religious or priestly career."

Father Duchaussois was present at the Missionary Conference held in London at the end of September, 1922, and he delivered there a much-appreciated lantern lecture on the persons and places described in this book. On October 17, 1922, he was brought into the presence of Pope Pius XI by an Italian Bishop, Mgr. Migliore, who, in his private audience, had given His Holiness a copy of *Aux Glaces Polaires*. The Holy Father had already opened the book and was much interested in it. "I must tell you," he said to the author, "that, when I was a young student, one of the first books which I read in the library of the Villa Borghese was about the Mackenzie. I still remember very well Cape Turn Again and the Barren Land, and the fate of the great explorer Franklin!" But His Holiness turned to speak of mission work and of the legions of missionaries required by the Church. "And it is the Oblates who are in that sphere of desolation," he said. "Ah! les braves ouvriers!" The new Pope was no doubt thinking of the Alps and their snows, for he added: "I have always thought that very great qualities, both physical and mental, are needed by our missionaries in such regions—*une grande valeur physique et morale*." Father Duchaussois mentioned that the Vicar Apostolic in Mackenzie—whose portrait in travelling attire was on the open page of the book—was not always in robust health. "How much greater, then, must be his strength of character—*sa force morale*! I will read this book, and I will pray for the Oblate Missions." And Pius XI sent away with a very hearty blessing the kind Bishop and his Vicar General, as well as the young missionary author, who seemed to be walking upon air rather than upon marble steps.

The author, when in Rome again for the beatification of the Little Flower of Carmel, Blessed Teresa of Jesus, had the honour of giving a lecture on the subject of this book in the great hall of the Apostolic Chancellery on May 3,

INTRODUCTION

1923, in the presence of Cardinal Van Rossum, C.S.S.R., Prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda, of six other Cardinals, a great number of Bishops, and other distinguished persons, including the representative of the French Ambassador and Commander Roncagli, Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society. Mgr. Ercole, Secretary of the Missionary Union of the Clergy of Rome, introduced the lecturer, whose conference was described in very flattering terms by the *Osservatore Romano*.

THOMAS DAWSON, O.M.I.

CHURCH OF MARY IMMACULATE,
INCHICORE, DUBLIN,
Feast of SS Peter and Paul,
June 29, 1923.

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MID SNOW AND ICE

CHAPTER I

EXPLORERS AND FUR TRADERS

THE European who sets his face towards the immensities of North America finds himself in a New World indeed, a world of mystery. Even in early ages Europeans dreamed of some great land of the West, which the *Audax Iapeti genus* might yet hope to discover. Did not St Brendan early in the sixth century cross the ocean to find, or at least to seek, some Fortunate Isle or Paradise of Delight? Hy Brazil, or Atlantis, some Promised Land of Bliss, must be there where the sun sinks to rest in his ocean-bed, so as once more, "with new-spangled ore, to flame in the forehead of the morning sky." Not poets alone were dreaming that the line of light, the golden path of rays, that played along the smooth wave toward the burning West must truly "lead to some bright isle of rest." Many an ardent seeker would go out into the unknown. There must be a new and fairer world somewhere. And was not the extreme West the extreme East? Was there not somewhere between Europe and Asia another continent, and therefore another ocean? The peoples dwelling by the Atlantic wave felt quite sure that there was some North-West Passage which would lead them into China. In 1492 Columbus reached San Salvador, "near the Indies," he thought. The name West Indies still remains in our geographies, and the American native races remain Indians! In 1513 the Pacific was seen by Spaniards kneeling speechless "upon a peak in Darien." But by no Spaniards, nor French, nor English could any way be found from the North Atlantic by which to be "the first to burst into that silent sea." In 1534 Jacques Cartier planted the French flag on a point of Gaspé Bay. It was *un bout de l'Asie*, he considered; and he hoped by going up the St Lawrence (which he christened) to cross "the Asiatic peninsula lying between himself and Cathay." In 1576 Frobisher, seeking India by the North-West, reached what he thought "the North

Pole, close to Asia." He had landed in what is now called Frobisher Bay, near Hudson Strait. The names of Hudson, Davis, Baffin, Smith, Lancaster, Melville, Booth, Ross, Parry, Barrow, and others remain on the map to give some idea of seventeenth and eighteenth century story and English adventure. And Behring and other names tell of Denmark or Russia. Still the North-West Passage was not found. For two centuries France and England sought for it in vain. The name La Chine was given by La Salle to a place (near Montreal) where the Canadian Oblate noviciate now is (having been transferred from Longueuil). That name was meant by the celebrated voyager only as a reminder of the object of his quest, but when he sailed into the Gulf of Mexico in 1682 he thought himself at last within "the Chinese Yellow Sea." Still in very truth the Pacific was far away, and no North-West Passage was yet found. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries much exploration was done by the great Hudson Bay Company and the North-West Fur Company, whose names must often appear in these pages. In 1789 Alexander Mackenzie, a Highlander, an officer of the Fur Company at Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabaska (then called Lake of the Hills), made his way to the Polar Sea by following the great river which has since borne his name. Also, in a journey lasting a year (1792-93), he crossed what Father Faber calls "the savage, sylvan sublimities of the Rocky Mountains," and reached the Pacific coast near Cape Menzies, or the mouth of the present Simpson River in British Columbia. He was thus the first white man to cross the American continent in those high latitudes. Of course, he was accompanied in all his journeys by (French) Canadians, half-breeds, and Indians. The North-West Passage, however, was still to find. Franklin found it in 1845, but it was really no passage, because of the almost perpetual ice. The intrepid explorer, Sir John Franklin, never returned to civilized quarters, and his ships—the *Erebus* and *Terror*—remained fast-locked in the polar ice.

After the explorers in North America came the fur traders. In our day it is well known that the great Dominion is rich in mines of various kinds. Two or three hundred years ago nothing was known of them. A visitor to London a few years ago might have seen Sir Wilfrid Laurier and another Canadian Minister of State, Mr. Foster, admiring the crowds which stood to admire a great erection across Whitehall, which was meant to show to all eyes how truly it was said that Canada might be "the granary of the

Empire." But even in the eighteenth century Voltaire was not singular in supposing that there was no possibility of a granary in "a few acres of snow" covering a frost-bound land under a hungry sky. Furs were the riches sought and found by the early colonists, whether French or British.

A few names of men, of battles, and of places, and a few dates of treaties would fill up the whole history of North America. Quebec, founded by Champlain in 1608—a dream in some minds to build up a new France stretching from the St Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico; Ticonderoga; Fort Duquesne made Fort Pitt (now Pittsburg, Pennsylvania); the Plains of Abraham (Quebec); Montcalm and Wolfe laying down their lives together in defence of the view that even in the New World there was very little room; Treaty of Utrecht, 1713; of Paris, 1763. Since 1763 Canada and all its "backwoods" have been under the English Crown. Some people say that it was well that the Canadian Catholic people were not under French rule when, in the last decade of the eighteenth century, the profession of Christianity was called *le fanatisme*, and treated as a crime. Others remark that if Canada had remained French, the neighbouring colonists would never have separated from Great Britain. They would have felt that they needed the Mother Country. Perhaps it is better for us to think with the Catholic poet, Alexander Pope, that whatever is is right. In 1775, 1812, and (in a lesser need) 1866 the French Canadians remained faithful to the English side. They must have considered their own interest. Indeed, our own advantage—that is, the common good or public policy—is the real reason for "loyalty." Yet the religious sanction rightly given to loyalty may sometimes make Catholic Bishops seem to claim obedience to some "gracious Sovereign" for his own sake. Canadian Bishops and priests have certainly been at all times very loyal to the English Crown, but they must have had before their minds the interests of their own people. The feudal system, brought from France, and the traditional respect for established Governments, taught in the Catholic Church, must of course be taken into account. Still, the Canadian clergy and people can hardly be supposed to have had prejudices against George Washington rather than against George, King of England. But they knew that the American colonists were more hostile than the English Government to the language, laws, and religion of the Canadians. The home Government had reasons for "toleration" abroad,

which did not trouble them at home. Naturally the Canadian Catholics wished for toleration for themselves. Whether in our own day the French Canadians consider Ontarians less intolerant or more intolerant than Pennsylvanians or Virginians does not yet appear. But there may be a great many politicians now in Ontario who share the opinion held by Americans in the eighteenth century that all the people in Canada should be forced to become English-speaking Protestants. Nevertheless, the French Canadians will most probably preserve both their religion and their language.

The fur traders, who fill such a considerable space in Canadian history, are chiefly the great Hudson Bay Company. But the first men to engage in the fur industry, the first *coureurs des bois*, were of course the first colonists—the French. Cartier, Roberval, and Champlain made known to their fellow-countrymen this great source of wealth. All over the wilds of *Les Pays d'en Haut* (afterwards known vaguely as the Hudson Bay Territory, or the Great North-West) fur-bearing animals abounded: the bear (black, or white, or grey), the fox (black, or white, or spotted, or silver), the ermine, beaver, lynx, musk-rat, mink, otter, marten, skunk, wolverene, and several others. For such animals the Indians cared nothing. As Mgr. Taché wrote in our own day: "In the midst of desolation those creatures, roaming through forest and prairie as richly arrayed as Solomon in all his glory, were regarded with indifference or disdain by the Red Man." The buffalo and the reindeer were enough for him, and were worthy of his tomahawk or arrow. But the colonists, urged, too, by the French at home, set to work to find the precious skins and to bring them to Europe. They made Europe familiar with peltry far richer than the "deer-skins, dappled, dun, and white," which the Knight of Snowdoun, James Fitz-James, found in the home of the Lady of the Lake. And their dealings with the natives were in the course of time the occasion for the heroic labours of French priests, especially Franciscan Recollects, Jesuits, and Sulpicians. The colonists or habitants near the coast had their priests with them as they cleared the forest primeval, and amid the fogs tried to forget *la belle France*. But the fur traders and lovers of adventure, who, long before Locksley Hall, "burst all links of habit," and wandered far away, needed much more than others the restraining influence of religion. For them in reality, not in mere poetic dream, there was reared in the wild West a "dusky race, iron-jointed, supple-sinewed," quick to dive and quick to run. In 1673 an edict of the King of

France forbade "trapping" to young colonists, such a mode of life being prejudicial to the interests of "religion, agriculture, industry, the home, and the nation." However, what could be done religiously for the daring voyagers and trappers was done by the pioneer priests. In New France, from 1625 the Jesuits in particular were the bravest among the brave, suffering, too, at the hands of Indians, tortures which it makes one shudder even to imagine.

In 1680 the adventurers and traders in the Great Lone Land of the West were 800 in number. Fenimore Cooper, and General Sir William Butler (in his historic works and in *Red Cloud, the Solitary Sioux*), and others have pictured the life of such men on the prairies, and the lakes, and the rivers, and in the woods, sometimes of "dense, tangled growth springing out of the rotting wreckage of fallen trees," sometimes of mere scrub, where the rocks are near the surface. The traveller in the North-West may be frost-bitten in the winter; in the summer he is tormented by pestilent mosquitoes.

Two of the earliest adventurers seeking fortunes there—Radisson and Desgroseillers—in the years 1658-62, ranged through what we now call Manitoba, Wisconsin, Dakota, Montana, etc. They returned from Hudson Bay to Quebec with a load of valuable furs, which the Governor confiscated on the ground that they had traded and trapped without a licence. A shrewd Bostonian advised the discontented Frenchmen to go to London. They presented themselves in the Court of the Merry Monarch in 1666, the year of the Great Fire. "To become rich beyond the dreams of avarice" is always a very attractive prospect. The King's brother, the Duke of York (afterwards James II), and their cousin, Prince Rupert, were very glad to hear of the rich furs beyond Hudson Bay. Expeditions were fitted out, and preparations were made for the establishment of a chartered company. In 1670 it was launched as "The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson Bay." This Corporation was formed for the purpose of importing into England the furs and skins to be obtained from the North American Indians. Prince Rupert and another famous soldier, General Monk (Duke of Albemarle), and sixteen others were the original members of this Company, to which (*ex plenitudine potestatis!*) Charles II granted a charter, giving the Company all the powers of lordship and government, and the sole right of trade and traffic, in the unknown country watered by streams flowing into Hudson Bay. Rupert's Land was the first name of

that *terra incognita*, a name which still survives in the title of a Protestant Archbishop. James Bay and York Factory (or Trading Post) are other reminders of the early days, for the Duke of York and Lord High Admiral was a powerful friend at court of the enterprising Company.

The fur industry was the source of great fortunes even from the beginning. Nevertheless, the adventurers had their difficulties and their losses. The French often attacked them, both *vi et armis* and by questioning their monopoly. Nor did the difficulties come to an end when the Peace of Utrecht (1713) ceded all rights over Hudson Bay (as well as Acadia and Newfoundland) to England. Individual traders continued to defy the exclusive claims of the company. They had many advantages over the servants of the company on account of their old friendliness with many Indians and half-breeds, who knew French, and were marvellously good guides, porters, boatmen, and trappers. The success of the Hudson Bay Company was slow. In the middle of the eighteenth century that Company had only five forts or trading posts (near the bay itself) and 120 employees. After the cession of all Canada in 1763 there was a rush of fur traders into the North-West. Finally, in 1783 numbers of them—French and Jacobite Scots—combined to form the “North-West Fur Company of Montreal.” The fierce competition between the two Companies demoralized the Indians, to whom both Companies brought an abundance of fire-water. Murders and other crimes became shockingly common. Yet religious influence was far to seek. Even in Eastern Canada the Catholic religion was in bonds. What could be done for the Far West and North?

The competition between the Companies and the disorders and crimes threatened also to exhaust the supply of furs. The animals were slaughtered indiscriminately and at all seasons. At last, in 1821, the two Companies united as the Honourable Hudson Bay Company. In 1870 the Dominion Government bought out the Company's exclusive rights for £300,000, and immense tracts of land. Since then that great Company, without having in theory any monopoly, has continued to be the rich and powerful trading Company which it had been before.

These few points of its history cannot be considered out of place in these pages. Both before and after 1870 very friendly relations have existed between the pioneer traders and the pioneer missionaries. Perhaps there was a certain sameness of policy—undeclared, indeed, or even unconscious

—between them. The Company had no wish to see colonists coming into their territories. The missionaries cannot have thought that the coming of Paleface miners and others would improve the morals of the poor Indians and half-breeds. Nevertheless, it must be said that Oblate Bishops and priests did make known to Eastern Canada and the world the potential riches of the North-West. Of Father Lacombe in particular it was said in a public speech after his death: "He laid down roads to carry us towards the setting sun, and he built up altars to lift us to the sky." It was not mere personal friendship which made men like Sir William van Horne and Lord Strathcona so willing to oblige Father Lacombe, and through him the other missionaries. Great services had been rendered to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company by the missionaries.

In the still earlier days, in the middle of the nineteenth century, Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson Bay Company, seems to have been of the same mind as the two personages whom we have named. Of course, like so many other intelligent officials of the British Empire all over the world, he knew that the influence of the Catholic Church was all in favour of peace and order and sobriety. This "Governor of Rupert's Land" knew well also that most of the hunters and trappers and boatmen employed by his company were Canadian or half-breed Catholics, and that it would be only right to be on very friendly terms with their priests. Consequently, Sir George Simpson—the Emperor, as somebody called him, so high and wide was his authority—rendered many services to the Catholic missionaries, giving them free passages, and in various places free board and lodging. In his Council of Assiniboia, the governing body of the Red River Settlement (modern Manitoba), the first Catholic Bishop there, Mgr. Provencher, had a seat, afterwards occupied by Mgr. Taché.

Still there could not always be plain sailing or smooth water in the wild North. Sometimes the missionaries had to shoot the rapids, or to pull hard against the stream. The officials of the company, chief traders and chief factors, were mostly Scottish or English Protestants, who, although often kind and obliging, had an inherited dislike of "Popery and wooden shoes." In early days, Father Grollier wrote from the Far North to Mgr. Taché at the Red River: "We cannot get on without a Bishop here. A 'Lord' counts for much. We need our 'Prince-Bishop,' whose prestige will enable him to speak freely with the high officials, and will compel the respect of the Company's servants and the

Indians." Mgr. Taché felt the force of this appeal. He began negotiations for the appointment of Father Faraud as Bishop for a new Vicariate, to be called Athabaska-Mackenzie. Meanwhile he asked Mgr. Grandin, who became the first Bishop of St Albert (now the three dioceses of Edmonton and Calgary in Alberta, and Prince Albert in Saskatchewan), to visit the northern missions. During that visitation, which took him three years, Bishop Grandin wrote to Bishop Taché a letter which brings home to us how dependent the missionaries were on the Company's officials, without whose permission and assistance they could hardly travel, and could not even send a letter back to the civilized world. Bishop Grandin wrote: "And what shall I say of the poor 'Prince-Bishop' himself? 'Slave-Bishop' would be a better name for him. The unfortunate Bishop to come here will have to be the very humble servant of every clerk in the Company's service. Without the good graces of the Company he will be helpless; he will not be able to procure for himself even the necessaries of life. He will have to close his eyes to many things. He will have to speak well, for instance, of such a despicable and notorious character as N., the same man who tells me frankly that he objects very strongly to my presence as a Roman Catholic Bishop, although personally he likes me very much!"

One event of very great importance in those far-off days deserves special mention, because it really tells in favour of the Company. In 1858 the Protestant Archdeacon Hunter (a very worthy and zealous man, it would appear) took passage on the Company's barges going North into the Mackenzie district. Father Grollier, who was then at Great Slave Lake, at that time the most northerly Catholic Mission, determined to go, too, so as to allow the poor pagan Indians to hear of the Catholic Church. The consequence was that the local man in office and his clerks signed a petition that the Catholic priest should never again be allowed to go down the Mackenzie. In due course of time came an answer from Sir George Simpson ordering the district authorities to give a free passage to Father Grollier, to invite him to their table, and to give him lodging in their own quarters until they had built a suitable hut for him in whatever place he himself might select. Nor was this an exceptional act of impartial justice and kindness on the part of the powerful Company.

The *odium theologicum*, however, was not the only cause of friction with officials. Father Lacombe one day was abused through all the moods and tenses by probably the only

Irishman in any high place under the Company. This was John Rowand. So his name is always printed, though the well-known Irish name is Rowan. He was chief factor at the Fort of the Prairies, or Fort Edmonton. His stockaded fort has disappeared, making way for the city of Edmonton, the capital of Alberta. Rowand's portrait is about the most interesting illustration in the first volume of Father Morice's *History*. Rowand had authority over a territory which has been formed into two provinces—Saskatchewan and Alberta. It is no wonder that he was called the Governor. He was supposed to be a Catholic. But the best thing that could be said of him was that, although he never knelt down, he always stood up for his religion. Rowand befriended the famous missionary, Father de Smet, S.J., in the winter of 1845-46. In later times he was also the friend and benefactor of Father Lacombe. But when the "Blackrobe Voyageur" came for shelter into his fort one day with a couple of slips of fur on his collar, the sight was too much for a man trained all his life to think of his own promotion and profit, and of the dividends payable in London. Father Lacombe was robbing the Company, and was giving a scandalous example to the Indians, who had no other right than to bring in their furs to the various forts, and to accept in return what the Company knew to be just. In order to understand a matter of this kind one needs to be brought up with a proper respect for law and order. Some people of primitive ideas (like theologians) would say that wild animals in the woods are common property, or that the children of the woods and travelling missionaries have more right to them than anyone else. But what if there be a chartered company? When Father Lacombe was challenged and scolded by his friend, he tore off the pieces of fur. It may be that he threw them in the face of Rowand, who himself on another occasion threw a glass at the head of a man who was insulting the Catholic religion.

But if traders and missionaries sometimes had their difficulties, be it recorded that in one respect they were always brothers in arms. They were in a fraternity of hardship. The resources of the Company were great, but no resources and no foresight could always save its agents from hunger and cold, from accidents, or from death. More than once it happened that it was the travelling missionary who was able to make some return to his friends, unexpectedly coming upon them in the same trail. As lately as 1890 the Right Rev. Bishop Grouard, going North in a canoe down the Mackenzie in the spring of the year, found the two men in

charge of Fort Wrigley (much farther North than Fort Simpson) at death's door after a winter of famine. They had eaten the furs in their store, and they were trying to live, or rather not to die, by eating the roots which with great difficulty they dug out of the ground. The Bishop shared his provisions with them and saved their lives. So it was that in that wild North land for long years the traders and the missionaries, like the explorers before them, from different motives, but with the same stout heart and indomitable courage, were accustomed to face danger and death.

CHAPTER II

“DA MIHI ANIMAS”

THERE was one of old who said, after a victory in which he was allowed to share: “Da mihi animas: Give me the persons, the living souls.” All the good things or spoils he willingly left to others. Even to save a soul alive for a few years yet, in a world that is a fleeting show, is no petty object of ambition. When a Marconi message (S.O.S.) flashes across a waste of waters, high is the heart and noble is the mind of one who hearkens to that call, and breasts the waves in an endeavour to save the life of a fellow-mortal. The missionary priest has a still nobler end in view, one which makes of small account all his possible sacrifices or dangers.

In the year 1867-68 Bishop Grandin was in France, after three years of travel and mission work in the Mackenzie territory. His fellow-novice, Father Boisramé, then in charge of the Irish noviciate near Dublin, who so often spoke admiringly of the two great missionary Bishops, Mgr. Taché and Mgr. Grandin (and who was so afflicted one day when the unfounded report came of the death of Mgr. Taché), wrote to beg his old friend to pay a visit to Ireland. The answer asked if the visit would be of any service to the missions in the extreme North. Perhaps no hope of that sort could be held out. At all events, the friends did not meet. During his visit to a French seminary at that date, Bishop Grandin said: “In the country from which I come there are many men who lead hard lives, who suffer many privations. And for what? To collect the skins of wild beasts! Not a pekan’s pelt is lost, not a fox’s tail. We look for something better. We have a nobler mission and a higher reward. We seek to win souls to Christ. We go into the wilds after those whom he calls his lost sheep, and with his blessing we lead them into the one fold of the one Shepherd. Who will come over and help us?”

The missionaries, labouring for the salvation of souls in the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries in what is now the Dominion of Canada, made themselves the fathers and servants of nations, which have left hardly a trace in

what is seen to-day by the traveller over any one of the three lines of rails which link Atlantic and Pacific. The traveller sees many great cities and many homesteads of the Palefaces. If he passes through prairies, "the noble savage" and the herds of buffaloes are no longer galloping there. Yet the early colonists or invaders found millions of men, enjoying life and liberty, and certainly pursuing happiness, if they did not find it, in their seemingly illimitable hunting-grounds, to which they gave such names as Manitoba, the land of Manitou (the Great Spirit), as Father Lacombe used to explain it—that is, the boundless land. Why have they dwindled? Why are there millions no longer? Why are those vigorous human lives so rapidly dying? God knows. But some things we ourselves may note. The inhabitants of the prairies and the woods were all Indians, but they were in a dozen or more nations, and they were not usually smoking the pipe of peace. *Surget gens contra gentem* is one of the scriptural signs of the end of a world. Before ever the Palefaces came among them, teaching them the use of new weapons of destruction, Iroquois and Algonquins were engaged in mutual slaughter, like the Europeans of our day. The "civilized" men brought among them also those vices and diseases which are the scourge of humanity, even in countries that are no strangers to cleanliness or hygiene. Next came small-pox and scarlatina to ignorant creatures, who would seek to drive away their burning fever by plunging into the lake or rolling in the snow. Another gift of the white men was the "fire-water." It must be remembered that even the ordinary food and drink of the white man, even in reasonable quantity, was not health-giving for the Indian. His stomach had its own customs and demands. European civilization, such as it is, is not the growth of a year or of a century. To the unprepared Indian it was brought on a sudden. It came upon him like a flood, and it washed him away. His taste for rum or whisky, once aroused, meant ruin of body and soul. No crime against fifth or sixth or seventh Commandment was too great to be committed, when it was the means to obtain the fatal draught. Rival traders brought him the drink in abundance, in order that he might the more abundantly supply them with carcasses and skins. Hence the wholesale killing of buffalo, and elk, and caribou. These, as well as the fur-bearing animals, began to disappear, although they had seemed at times such as no man could number. The poor Indian under civilizing influence proceeded to make away with the

very means of existence which he owed to Divine Providence.

It must be said also that the very presence of civilized men was necessarily fatal to the Indian. His roving life of absolute freedom could not possibly continue. The Americans formed an Indian territory; the Canadians more considerably mapped out a great number of reserves. These reserves to a European eye and mind might seem little principalities. To the inmates, “cabined, confined,” and living in a measure upon Government doles, they are only prisons. The late Archbishop Taché (who died at St Boniface, Manitoba, in 1894) said: “To understand their present condition, one should have seen this savage race in early days stalking along their immense hunting-grounds, half-naked and proud; darting eagle eyes over boundless horizons which were all their own; drawing in great breaths of the freest air in the world; monarchs of all they surveyed, having all a monarch’s freedom and power without the burden of his wealth or the restraint of his dignity; lifted on the wings of a sort of religious enthusiasm in the enjoyment of the chances and changes, the hardships and the final success, of the chase of those herds which the Great Spirit sent in fresh numbers every year to his children of the woods. One should have seen all that, and with a sympathetic eye, in order to realize what the Indians suffer in our day, shut up in their reserves, ill at ease, often hungry, fed by the charity of strangers, tormented and poisoned by maladies to which their native vices had not subjected them.” Since these words were written in 1880 the Indians of the reserves have become fewer in number, and their inevitable intermarriages seem to foretell that they will not be stretched out on this world’s rack much longer.

The utter dislike of Indian blood for a quiet and sedentary life was well seen when Father Lacombe, after much toil and begging, and with Government help, formed the settlement called St Paul des Métis in Alberta, near the Saskatchewan border. He had been moved with pity at seeing the *métis* or half-breeds lounging at the corners of the rising towns, waiting for chance employment or chance enjoyment. But his little Paraguay reduction was nothing but a glorious failure. How often, indeed, even in the most civilized countries, educated and Christian people for some reason break away from the monotony of agricultural life, to lose themselves in the crowd!

Archbishop Taché and Father Lacombe, and the Church for which they stood, whilst seeking souls for eternal man-

sions, would have saved and civilized the Indians in this world also if they had only been free to make sacrifices. The work of the Church was begun in New France in the seventeenth century. Heroic days, heroic men! Recollects (1615), Jesuits (1625), Sulpicians (1657)! And a modern historian, though anti-Catholic and anti-French, says more: "Holy women, often nobly born, conducted hospitals and missions on the very edge of this bloody wilderness, with always a precarious margin of escape from the tomahawk and worse." These holy women and first foundresses still live on the banks of the St Lawrence, and very far away, in the persons of their spiritual children.

The work of the Church in North America was begun, we repeat, in the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, under English rule in Canada, the Church was hampered or oppressed. Early in the nineteenth her missionaries began to stretch out their hands full of spiritual gifts towards the upper country, the lands beyond the Great Lakes, where the various "nations" sat in darkness and the shadow of death, both temporal and eternal. Lord Selkirk's Red River Settlement gave an opening towards the Farther West. Many priests of the diocesan clergy in Lower Canada went up to the Red River—all deserving of special mention. Their pioneer leader was Abbé Provencher (afterwards Bishop). There were some Highlanders and Irishmen in the Red River Settlement, and at least one priest from Ireland. But the religious history of the Red River and of the North-West centres in its beginnings in that truly Apostolic man, Abbé Provencher, and his flock was composed chiefly of French Canadians, some Germans, half-breeds, and Indians. With another Canadian priest in 1818 he reached the Red River at St Boniface, with Fort Garry on the opposite—i.e., west—bank. He was consecrated Bishop in 1821. In 1838 Abbés F. N. and M. Blanchet (brothers) and Demers (all Bishops afterwards) went to the Indian tribes of British Columbia and Oregon. In those times the present States of Washington and Oregon were a territory in dispute between England and the United States, but to Canadian ecclesiastics were only a distant part of the vague upper country, like Caledonia (North British Columbia). "The missions of the Oregon Country" was indeed the first name some years later of those scattered missions of the Oblate Fathers which after a time were gathered together as a diocese on the British Columbia mainland.

In 1845 the Oblates, who had been labouring among

many Indian tribes in Eastern Canada, were brought by Bishop Provencher into the North-West. That Apostolic prelate, dying at St Boniface in 1853, left as his successor one of the Oblates, Father Taché, who in 1851 (as coadjutor) had been consecrated Bishop in France by the Founder of the Oblates, Mgr. de Mazenod, Bishop of Marseilles.

This date brings us to a point, in this little history of some Christian missions, in which we may look before and after, and take a general view.

Three hundred years of Church history in Canada, where obstacles to the spread of religion were enormous, might be summed up thus: In the first half of the seventeenth century—that is, for fifty years after the arrival of Champlain—there was no Bishop in New France. In 1659 there was a Bishop in Quebec, Vicar Apostolic of a territory greater than Europe. In 1921 in the Canadian Dominion and Newfoundland there were forty dioceses. Taking by itself what most concerns us here—viz., Western Canada (that is, the jurisdiction of Bishop Provencher), stretching from the Lake of the Woods to the Pacific, and from the United States boundary to the Farthest North—there was only one Bishop in 1821, and still only one in 1859. In 1921 there were eight dioceses and four Vicariates Apostolic. In the Vicariates it is probable that there are not yet any other priests than the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who are also numerous still in the modernized dioceses except Victoria (Vancouver Island). Such is a little summary of results due, under God, to the prolonged labours of devoted priests and nuns, whose means were very slender and hardships very great.

CHAPTER III

THE LAND, THE RACE, THE CONSOLER

TO religious minds it has justly seemed that it was by a very special divine providence Christianity was brought last of all in these days to the Far West and North of the New World for the earthly consolation and eternal bliss of a suffering, a disappearing, a dying race. Such (as we have already seen) are the Red Indians, for whom the missionaries have been devoting themselves for a hundred years. Indeed, for half that time these children of nature, accustomed to think they could never be out of bounds, have been in great numbers shut up in compounds called reserves. In those reserves the priests and nuns have done what could be done for the poor Indians and the half-breeds. The Church, if free, might have preserved and civilized those new Goths and Franks. However, the Church of Christ is the Mother of Divine Consolation, and her devoted messengers in West and North, not being able to do more, have calmed the fierce and rude passions of Sioux or Cree, and with sacrament, and prayer, and instruction they have brought light and peace into the wigwams of the departing, whilst the children left forlorn they have taught to lisp the holy names of Jesus and Mary, and of the Father in heaven. The Canadian Government has given generous assistance to many Indian technical schools established in the reserves, and entrusted to the sole care of the priests and nuns, thus helping one part of the work of the Christian Catholic missionaries.

But the work of these ambassadors for Christ, whose feet are beautiful in the pathless forest and on the frozen ice, in these seventy-five years that are gone, have not been mostly in the partly civilized surroundings of Government reservations. Even in the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century there are the Déné (Tinneh) and Eskimo races—the principal subject of this volume—who, in their forests of spruce and larch, their frozen wilderness and barren lands, have retained almost their original independence, and have been almost outside the reach of the long arm of the Paleface. Even as we write, it is true, the

very last fastnesses of the native races are being brought within the circle in which the white man will dig and delve, and will search the waters. The newspapers of the end of September, 1921, announced that in the very Farthest North the Canadian Government had been rounding up the last remnants of the native races and making a new treaty. A Government Commission, or Treaty Party, was in the extreme northland during the summer of 1921. The commissioners went as far north as Fort MacPherson on the Arctic Red River, where there is a Catholic mission under the invocation of the Holy Name of Mary. Looking at the map, one is led to suppose that the commissioners could not have gone much farther without walking into the Arctic Ocean. According to the newspaper reports, the number of Indians in the Farthest North is 3,000. The largest band (300) is about Fort Rae (St Michael's Mission), on the north arm of Great Slave Lake. Their hunting-grounds are the barren lands from Fort Rae to the north end of the Great Bear Lake. Those natives with whom the commissioners made a treaty are "about 1,900 Indians who hitherto had not been reached." Here are the two parts of this new treaty: The tribes have "ceded to the Crown for as long as grass grows and sun shines" a territory of 372,000 square miles, the lands of their forefathers. Perhaps it was a careful lawyer who avoided saying "while water runs," for in those regions there are long months when there is no running water, whether laughing (Minnehaha) or moaning. On the other part, the Canadian Government undertakes to give each Half-breed a lump sum of 240 dollars, and each Indian a sum of 7 dollars now and 5 dollars a year for life. The Government will also supply some food for the sick and destitute, as well as ammunition and fishing tackle. Bishop Breynat, Vicar Apostolic of Mackenzie, was, as a matter of course, with this Treaty Party. Bishop Grouard and Father Lacombe had been included in similar parties in past years in territories not so far North. And it was Father Lacombe who dissuaded the Blackfeet from resisting by force the coming of the iron horse into their ancestral hunting-grounds. The missionaries are not likely to be blamed for trying to obtain the best possible terms for their wards, and at the same time commending a submission without bloodshed rather than an inevitable submission after the loss of many lives. And, of course, the native tribes could never turn to account the oil and mineral riches of their native wilds. The missionaries knew of these sources of wealth. They neither concealed their knowledge nor sought "to

promote companies." But they felt sure that eventually the whites would come, and who was to hinder them? Nevertheless, in various parts of the world Bishops and priests have a very trying task, a "very hard row to hoe," when some brave men say, like Patrick Henry in the United States, "Give me liberty, or give me death," and when the issuing of such a challenge does not seem to be rational and lawful. In 1870 at Fort Garry (Winnipeg) Bishop Taché could not take part with Riel and his associates, although it was the Ottawa Government who were acting illegally, as Lord Granville in London acknowledged. In 1885, during a very excusable uprising, two Oblate Fathers were cruelly slain at Frog Lake in a remote corner of what is now Alberta, because they thought that it was not rational or lawful to choose a greater instead of a lesser evil, and that the redress of grievances is necessarily slow, and calls for patience. On various other occasions before 1921 the missionary Bishops and priests have co-operated with the Canadian Government, whilst using all their influence for the greater advantage of the aboriginal tribes.

But the newest treaty will no doubt come into full effect by slow degrees. However plentiful petroleum and coal may be in the Farthest North, they will not be reached very easily. Meanwhile, the life of the Indians will remain pretty much as it was during the many months which the author of this volume spent in their midst in the Vicariates Apostolic of Athabaska and Mackenzie.

To come into that North-West country is to come into a newer world. Eastern Canada, with its Gulf and River of St Lawrence, its great lakes, its multitude of rivers, its odoriferous hills, its woods alive with song, its cultivated fields, its blue sky mirrored in purest crystal waters, seems to the European traveller a very paradise upon earth. Reaching Western Canada, the traveller finds himself in the prairie. For three days and nights that endless prairie seems to defy advance even on wings of steam. We go on and on for 800 miles through the southern parts of the prairie provinces—Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. There are some streams, and rivers, and lakes, and an occasional wooded islet. But the level prairie is always there. It seems to have no end whichever way one looks, and there is so much of it that it would be oppressive if we were not traversing it with great rapidity and in all comfort. The geologist tells us that we are rolling along the bed of an ocean, whose waters withdrew of old on the one side into the Arctic Sea, on the other into Hudson Bay.

The presence of coal shows that the primeval forest has been here; the dams or causeways of the beavers, striping the prairie on every side, give evidence of the later presence of marsh or muskeg. To-day a rich soil appears, waiting only to be tickled into fertility.

If at length we leave the prairie, pass the foot-hills of the Rockies, and climb the mountains on winding rails—a marvel of human ingenuity and courage—we shall find ourselves in British Columbia, an ocean of petrified mounting waves, the Switzerland of the Canadian Dominion, an inexhaustible reservoir of wealth in water, forest, and mine.

But the missionary interested in Athabaska and Mackenzie stops short of the Rocky Mountains. The first Vicar Apostolic in those regions was Bishop Faraud, O.M.I. (consecrated in 1862, d. 1890), who had for coadjutor Bishop Clut, and for successor Bishop Grouard. In 1901 the single Vicariate, Athabaska-Mackenzie, was divided, Bishop Grouard “governing and continuing to govern,” as Cardinal Wiseman would have said, the Athabaska Vicariate, and Bishop Gabriel Breynat being consecrated for Mackenzie. Both devoted missionary prelates are still “in harness” in 1923, but for some years Bishop Grouard has had a coadjutor in the person of the comparatively youthful Bishop Jousard.

The Athabaska Vicariate includes the northern part of Alberta, and a smaller north-west part of Saskatchewan (these two civil provinces having been formed only in 1905), and stretches from the 55th to the 60th degree of latitude. It touches on the south the new archdiocese of Edmonton, on the east the Vicariate of Keewatin, on the north Mackenzie, and on the west that portion of British Columbia which is joined ecclesiastically with the Yukon Vicariate.

The Mackenzie Vicariate and that of Keewatin (under Bishop Charlebois, O.M.I.) take in the whole of the immense North-West territories—*i.e.*, the as yet uncharted lands which lie between the 60th degree and the North Pole, and between Hudson Bay and Yukon. Until 1908 the Mackenzie Vicariate stretched still farther west, crossing the Rocky Mountains, and including that part of the North-West territories which is now called Yukon as a separate territory under a Government of its own. The change of civil status came as a result of the rush (in 1897) to the Klondike, a branch of the Yukon River. Following the civil change came the erection of the Prefecture Apostolic of Yukon in 1908, and its further change into a Vicariate, under Bishop Bunoz, in 1917. The Keewatin Vicariate though

by map lines taking (as we have said) the eastern portion of the North-West territories, is by its mission stations farther south in touch with the organized dioceses of the prairie provinces. In the four Vicariates we have named the Bishops and priests are Oblates of Mary Immaculate. In two of them we have made a pilgrimage of grace, of which we seek to give some account in these pages. But let it be remembered that what is said to-day as regards the mode of life of Indians, of Hudson Bay officers, of priests, Brothers, and nuns in the Athabaska and Mackenzie Vicariates was equally true seventy years ago and less in all those territories farther south which now make up seven organized modern dioceses. Fifty years ago, at St Boniface, on the east side of the Red River, there was the one Archbishop, having the headship of all the Catholic Missions between that point and the Pacific. In that same space to-day, in 1923, there are the archdioceses of St Boniface (1847-71), Winnipeg (1917), Regina (1911-17), Edmonton (1871-1917), and Vancouver City (1890-1908), along with the dioceses of Prince Albert (and Saskatoon) and Calgary. There are many other priests than Oblates now in these seven dioceses. All the Bishops are of the secular clergy. "There's nothing here for tears" or for complaint. Pioneers are pioneers. The forlorn hope sacrifices itself that others may be safe and prosperous. Every stately and lofty building must have its foundations hidden in the clay. There can be no question of putting one's sickle into another man's harvest when the chief representative of the master of the harvest makes a fresh division of labour. It is only the fulfilment of our Lord's own words to his Apostles: "Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labours." And the newcomers, too, if in easier circumstances, are themselves efficient labourers, so that in those new countries, white already to the harvest, "both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." In Eastern Canada grateful ecclesiastics recall how the Oblates, besides their mission work among the native tribes in Saguenay or Labrador, or by the lakes, have built up dioceses—Ottawa, Mont Laurier, Haileybury, North Ontario. Wherever and howsoever Christ is preached, "whether on mere occasion or in truth," apostolic souls rejoice, and will rejoice. There can be no change in that respect, though systems may change and pass away without blame. In England of old the Benedictines were in charge of many cathedrals. In the new arrangement of "The Second Spring," out of respect for the services of that great monastic order in the con-

version of England, provision was made to leave the Benedictines in charge of one cathedral and one episcopal see. Yet a single lifetime has seen the making and the unmaking of that provision. And surely the change or modification must have been with the good-will, or at the request, of the Order concerned. St Lorcan O'Toole (d. 1180) brought a community of Regular Canons to live with him at Christ Church, Dublin. His immediate successors, John Comyn (1184-1212) and Henri de Loundres (d. 1228), did not continue that community way of life. They set up another cathedral, to be more their own, in St Patrick's Church outside the walls. The specially characteristic poet of the nineteenth century thought that "one good custom," however good, might in time grow to be not only tiresome, but even harmful. So let us all, everywhere, without wanting to "spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change," welcome all changes when they have actually come to pass.

CHAPTER IV

THE DÉNÉS

ATHABASKA and Mackenzie, as territorial names, will not be found on new maps of Canada. But they remain in ecclesiastical documents, and also in those of the Hudson Bay Company, in which they have done still longer service. Going as witnesses of missionary work into those high latitudes, we find ourselves, according to the modern map, in Northern Alberta, and in the still wilder territories of the North-West Mounted Police. There we still find the Indians—and their missionary priests and nuns—living those lives of uncertainty, risk, and hardship which alone were lived for many long years in what are now four well-organized provinces of the Dominion and eight dioceses of the Church.

The Dénés roam the forests of Athabaska and Mackenzie; the Eskimos the barren lands and the Arctic shores of the Farthest North. To what race do those peoples belong, and are they descendants of Adam and Eve? In our own time the Rationalists, not always very rational, said that they could not be of the same stock as Asiatics and Europeans. They said so, in order to be able to add that the Bible story about our first parents was untrue, and therefore revealed religion was a myth. In July, 1875, such was the "dogma" taught in an International Congress of Americanists meeting in the old ducal palace at Nancy in France. Baron de Rosny, professor of the Japanese language, quoted triumphantly, with much applause, the truly Voltairian and amusingly irrelevant question of Voltaire: "If God Almighty could create mosquitoes in America, why not a separate race of men?" Fathers Petitot and Grouard, O.M.I., happened to be present at the meeting. Father Petitot stood up and begged the chairman to postpone the conclusion of the debate until the following day, when he hoped to be able to lay before the congress some facts which he had learned in a missionary career of fifteen years among the Dénés and Eskimos in the Far North. There was sufficient applause to make the chairman agree to this reasonable request. The question of the origin of the North American races was more puzzling forty or fifty years ago than it is now, when it is supposed that there were

Scandinavian settlements in Greenland, Newfoundland, and Labrador in the ninth or tenth century, and that it is easy enough to cross Behring Strait, and that the tribes of Eastern Siberia and Alaska have never been altogether strangers to each other. Father Petitot, in the Oblate noviciate house at Nancy, with the novices whom he called to his assistance, had a very busy night after his challenge to the free-thinkers. Next day he spoke at great length in the congress, gaining more and more acceptance of his views as he advanced. The following day he continued his discourse, and the armchair scientists, not attempting to answer him, moved unsuccessfully that he should be no longer heard. M. de Rosny had at length to record the passing of the following resolution: "It has been proved by the similarity of religious ideas, of manners and customs, of language, and of weapons, existing between them and the races of Asia and Oceania; and by their traditions concerning countries other than their own; and their description of animals unknown among themselves—it has been proved that the Eskimos, as well as Dénés and other Red Indians, are of Asiatic origin." A similar thesis was maintained by Father Morice a few years ago in a paper read before a learned society in the United States, and it met with general approval. Father Petitot was in France in 1875 for the printing of his dictionaries of the Déné and Eskimo languages. As a result of his irruption into the fray at Nancy, he was invited to make further contributions to the work of some learned societies, he received a silver medal from the French Geographical Society for a chart showing his own travels in previously unexplored regions, and he was made an Officer of the French Academy. The learned seem now agreed to recognize three great divisions of the human race—the white or Caucasian (Japheth), the yellow or Mongolian (Sem), and the black or Ethiopian (Cham). The North American aborigines are classed as Mongolians.

The conversion of the Eskimos is only beginning, though various self-sacrificing attempts have been made to teach them the meaning of Christ and of the Church. A later chapter will be devoted to them. They are quite a different race from the Déné Indians. At present we have to speak of the Dénés, who have nearly all been brought into the True Fold. Of course, we do not take account here of the missionary work of various Protestants, zealous, well equipped, and well supported. The Catholic can only grieve over the presence in the mission field of a standing contradiction of the doctrines of the one authorized teacher of religion. Nevertheless, the Right Rev. Bishop Breynat

not very long ago publicly corrected a distinguished modern explorer, who had made little of the work done by Protestant missionary societies in the Canadian North.

Father Morice, O.M.I., has written about the great Déné race at considerable length, not only in a special monograph, but in other historical works. One of his qualifications for writing about the Dénés is that he was their missionary for years in British Columbia. Dénés, it appears, means *the men*. There are other races in the world, perhaps several races, which also consider themselves *the men*, and all others only foreigners—*i.e.*, barbarians. The Dénés surely have every right to call themselves by a name pleasing to themselves. Of that North American race there are several tribes, more or less distinct from each other. There are the Montagnais, the Caribou-eaters, and the Castors (or Beavers) in Athabaska. There are the Yellow-knives, the Dog-ribs, the Slaves, the Hare-skins, the Loucheux (Squint-eyed), the Sékanais, and the Bad People (who do not particularly deserve the name) in Mackenzie. Three other Déné tribes are in British Columbia—*viz.*, the Carriers, the Chilcotins, and the Babines. Father Morice, in one of his books, tells us, moreover, that the Navahos and Apaches in the south of the United States are of the same Déné or Athapascan stock. (Athapascan is the word used by learned ethnologists, but it is the same as Athabaskan.) Their separation from their northern brethren dates from some of their wars of long ago. The Red Indians seem to have been of old almost as bad as the Europeans of the present day in regard of fighting and certain other crimes. The northern Dénés are a mild and timid folk. Their southern relations, the Apaches—are not !

The tribes of Athabaska and Mackenzie at the present day are very like what they appeared to the first explorers. Their greater distance from "civilization" and their inhospitable climate have saved them in great measure from the maladies which are rapidly thinning out the remnant of the Algonquin tribes. The American Indians are of a copper colour, usually about the middle height, well developed, with high cheek bones, long hair, deep-set, brilliant brown eyes, and prominent nose. Their long, lank hair remains generally black even in old age, but an occasional veteran will begin a speech by calling attention to the snow which his many winters have left upon his head. Their abundant hair is worn long, hanging on the shoulders, and not farther even in the case of the women. There is a surprising contrast between the pitiful bald pates of so many of the men from beyond the "Great Water" and the plenti-



RETURNING FROM THE WOODS

ful flowing locks of the children of the woods. The Indians are very proud of their scalp, and their enemy's scalp has been from time immemorial their most highly prized trophy. Their long hair, left uncared-for from childhood, does not, however, favour cleanliness! It is a forest of vermin. The pure-blooded Déné is beardless. His white, well-enamelled teeth are marvellous instruments for the cutting and grinding of the dried meat or other rough food on which he feeds. He knows no toothache and he needs no dentist.

The Indian men walk as if bandy-legged, their toes turning in. Training from childhood gives their legs this formation, which makes them so strenuous and untiring on the march, even on snow-shoes, and so swift and stealthy in capture of the game. Their craft as hunters; their keenness of vision; their knowledge of natural phenomena; their skill as boatmen, even in shooting the most dangerous rapids; their powers of endurance in hunger, thirst, and fatigue; their stoic silence even under torture; and their occasional cruelty, are all proverbial.

The dress of the Indian, as he goes upon his various quests, is very simple. When fully dressed—as he rarely is in summer, says Father Morice—he wears a buffalo skin as a cloak, sloping at the sides, rounded at the bottom. Leggings, also of skin, whether of buffalo, deer, or hare, are made fast by thongs round the waist like the loin cloth. Moccasins of the same material complete the costume. In the summer season the men are often content with the loin cloth and the moccasins.

The women wear the same sort of cloak as the men, only longer. They wear also a petticoat fastened round the waist by a belt. The Indian woman dresses very modestly. She would be dreadfully shocked if she could peep into a European ballroom.

Since the coming of the traders the Indians have been giving up their old mode of dress, to their disadvantage. Their own garments were light, warm, and weather-proof. The shoddy clothing which they buy from the whites is in every way different. Sometimes an Indian will keep only the legs of his new trousers, but whatever he wears of European clothing may get torn in his first day in the woods. Washing and mending are arts and sciences unknown to the Indian. His European clothing—torn, dirty, and damp, saturated with sweat and grease—instead of defending him from the elements, becomes his shirt of Nessus, the cause of rheumatism, and of the too often fatal pneumonia.

Vanity in dress is not quite unknown even in the Farthest North. On great occasions the Indian woman will add trinkets and tinsel as trimmings of her robe. The man will

buy a new shirt and put it on over whatever he is wearing already, letting it float about him as the weather pleases. He will not leave it off, or any other article of clothing, until, torn and worn, it disappears in rags. It must be said, however, that those Indians who live in the neighbourhood of the trading posts or forts and the missions gradually learn something of cleanliness and tidiness.

One article of dress of the ancient days remains in honour among all the tribes, and among the Europeans themselves. The moccasin, of deer-skin chamois, so soft and so firm, and so easily strapped on, is the ideal footwear.

For a dwelling-place the Déné is not hard to please. He willingly sleeps under the canopy of heaven, even in the coldest season. He can make a hut, if needed, with a few boughs hung upon a weeping willow. His regular home, or residence, his hunting-lodge, wigwam, tepee, or tent, is a simple affair of conical shape formed of skins or mats and bark mounted on poles, and is as easily dismounted as the proverbial tents of the Arabs.

The furnishing of this house, in wood or prairie, is equally simple. Gideon's fleece would have sufficed for a bed. The Indian for his bed is content with the skin of a buffalo, or moose, or wolf. His hearth holds a few burning branches in the middle of the hut. The articles of furniture do not take up much space. There is a kettle; there are a few tea-cups of birch bark or of zinc, a gun, a hatchet, a pipe for the man and another pipe for the squaw. In a quarter of an hour the whole establishment may be stowed away in canoe or dog-sled, according to the season. In another quarter of an hour the same establishment may be once more complete, when the travellers wish to camp out for the night. Such is the movable home in which the lord of the frozen forests is born, lies down to rest, and dies; in which, when a Christian, he says his prayers, and at length, when all his hunting days are over, he hears the absolving words said over him, he is signed and sealed with the last anointing, and refreshed with the holy Viaticum for the journey to the land beyond the sky.

The missionaries have much of interest to tell us about the Déné language. Father Petitot wrote so long ago as 1867: "Each tribe speaks a dialect of its own. The original language stock is not found in America. The Indian dialects bear the same relation to that stock as French, Italian, Spanish, and Provençal to Latin. The Déné dialects are what Humboldt calls agglutinative, and Duponceau polysynthetic—*i.e.*, attaching many meanings to one word. The Déné does not reflect upon his thoughts or impressions.



AT HIS OWN DOOR

Our missionaries, like Father Petitot, and after him Mgr. Breynat, Father Laurence Le Goff, and Father Morice, first learned the Indian languages from the natives themselves, and from the half-breeds. Afterwards they composed dictionaries and grammars. A Protestant clergyman, Mr. Evans, invented a syllabary—that is, a sort of alphabet in which each character represents a syllable. This syllabary is now universally used for writing and printing the Indian dialects. Father Morice used it for instructing his Indians in British Columbia. At the present moment at the Catholic Mission at Hobbema in Alberta (on the line of railway between Calgary and Edmonton), Father Moulin, O.M.I., edits a little monthly magazine in the Cree dialect and in syllabic characters. The only words intelligible to us are in the title—viz., *Sacred Heart Review*. The younger Indians, of course, are learning, or have learned, English. It may be of interest to give a literal English translation of the Ave Maria as it appears in the syllabic characters in the Montagnais dialect:

[illegible][illegible]

“By thee I let go my spirit (*i.e.*, in joy), O Mary. Very well he who-has-made-the-world loves thee. Thy heart near-to he is. All women above thou-art great, and Jesus, he-has-been-in-thy-womb. He alone is great.

“Holy Mary, the almighty his Mother thou-art. We-are-bad, yet for us pray now, and when we-shall-die, on the eve. Very well it is so, if it were.”

The language of the Dénés is a picture of their mind. For sensible objects they have innumerable words, for general ideas hardly any. Before the coming of the Blackrobe, all their attention was given to things of sense. Their sight and hearing are far more acute than ours. But to high thoughts or noble aspirations they are too often strangers. An Indian sees or hears the herd of caribou long before the hunter whom he guides. The Indian travels safely with no other compass than the stars, no other finger-post than the colours of the leaves or the shape of the snow-drifts. At twelve years of age he knows the names and uses of every sinew or fibre of animal and plant. He forgets nothing which he has once noticed. He will find his way in old age in a trackless forest through which he passed just once in childhood. But his intellect seems asleep under the ashes of ignorance accumulating for generations. The name of a virtue or the simplest explanation of a religious truth seems usually something outside the range of his understanding. Tell him the parable of the lost sheep, or let it be reindeer, which the Good Shepherd goes out to seek and carries home to safety, he will ask you: "Did he eat it? Was it fat?"

Poetical views are not for the Indian. Talk about beauty being truth, or truth beauty, may be understood by other people, but certainly not by a member of the Déné race. For him beautiful or handsome is whatever serves his present needs. When a forest fire has devastated a magnificent landscape, the Indian is well content, for there is now an easier passage for his sled and a greater abundance of firewood. If you allow him to hang up many haunches of venison in his little church as a decoration, his artistic sense is gratified beyond measure.

To give some sort of education to the Indians was not the first thought of the missionaries. They set themselves first of all to study the language, and to master its idioms, and to force the words somehow or other to bring home to the pagan mind the meaning of virtue, religious mysteries, the commandments of God, the multitude of his tender mercies, the coming of the Son of God, the Son of Mary, and the making of the Christian Church. Afterwards secular education was taken in hand. It was a giant's task, says one critic. By the representatives of the Society commissioned to teach all nations that task was accomplished, especially when the Grey Nuns lent their aid.

The Dénés, as we have said, are "the men" *par excellence*. But they are not exceptional in so calling themselves. The Crees to the south of them, the Eskimos to the north of

them, proudly call themselves by a similar name in their own dialect. And surely *Déné*, and *Innoit*, and *Emivok* in the New World correspond faithfully enough to what we find everywhere in the Old World, and in all history, ancient or modern. Every race, of every colour—white, or black, or yellow—considers itself the best, the model of all others, the imperial race; foreigners are barbarians.

We may ask concerning those superior men, the Dénés, What was their condition before the light of the Gospel reached the darkness of their woods? What was the condition long ago of Norsemen and Teutons, of Franks and Gauls, of Britons and Gaels? And what will be the condition to-morrow of Europe if the fair form of religion disappears? "Leave a parish without a priest for twenty years," said the saintly Curé of Ars: "on adorera les bêtes." Moses had not been so long absent from his people whom he found adoring the golden calf.

Downright idolaters of some sort are all those whom revealed religion has not enlightened, or who—the still more unhappy ones—having once known the truth and tasted the heavenly gift, have apostatized, rejecting Christianity. Those who do not know God, or who deny him, become the slaves of evil spirits and human passions. The Algonquins of the prairies, a race ferocious in war, made human sacrifices a part of their religion. The Dénés of the northern snows, mild and timid, laid themselves out to appease the anger of they knew not what evil spirits who sought to harm them.

The Dénés in their own day had fought both with Algonquins and with Eskimos. Then in their fastnesses they had turned their weapons against each other, tribe becoming the enemy of tribe. Exhausted in spirit, and brought low in numbers by this internecine warfare, they became literally the wicked and cowardly ones, "fleeing in dread when no man pursued." Such they were found to be by the missionary when he came amongst them. He might be preaching one day in the midst of a camp, when suddenly the cry is raised, "Dénédjéré" (the bad man, the enemy). In an instant, in spite of the priest's remonstrance and assurances, all hands are at work upon the tents, the canoes are loaded and are soon hastening away, though there are no human beings within a hundred miles. What had really happened? Some woman, or child, or simpleton had heard or imagined the click of a gun, or had seen a broken twig, or a footprint in the grass. It was enough to send the whole band away in hasty flight from the enemy. Who was this terrible

enemy, this *dénédjéré ennaslini*, the wicked man? He never appeared. No one ever saw him. Or, at best, he was only like the ghost appearing to less primitive people, when "some saw an arm, and some a hand, and some the waving of a gown." But the *Dénés* seriously desired the *Blackrobe* to take notice that the enemy always alarmed them in the summer. If he came in the winter, it would be easy to be on one's guard against him, finding his footsteps in the snow.

Poor creatures! Cold, and hunger, and isolation, and the memory of old fields of slaughter create their hobgoblins of the brain. And the missionary is led to think that a very real imp, the Demon himself, is no stranger to the Indians' vain tears, finding his account in the wretched superstitions, which look to the sorcerer or medicine-man as having the power to save from the *dénédjéré*. The power of the sorcerer is not completely broken even at this day. And of old it was through him the *Dénés* paid their homage to "the higher spirits." These higher powers the *Dénés*, like the *Manicheans*, thought to be either good or evil. The Good Powerful or Mighty One, *Yédariénésou*, is the Being from whom all good comes. The Evil Powers, *Yédariéslini*, are the cause of all our woes. We are but irresponsible playthings in the hands of these contending powers, whose perpetual struggle for the mastery usually ends in favour of the Evil Powers.

The good and just Mighty One—hardly to be distinguished from the visible and felt powers of the universe—is *Néoltsini*, he by whom the earth was made. Some of the tribes, such as the *Hare-skins* and the *Loucheux*, had a notion of a sort of trinity somewhat like the Egyptian view. The Father (they said) is at the zenith; the Mother is at the nadir; the Son ranges along the sky from one to the other in a perpetual procession. One day the Son happened to notice the ball, which is our earth. Returning to his Father, he said, chanting the words, as the *Hare-skins* now chant them: "O my Father, enthroned on high, enkindle the fire of heaven upon that little island; this long time my brethren there are unhappy. See to it, O Father, to whom mankind is saying, Come down to us in pity."

An old sorceress named *K'atchoti* was asked by Father *Petitot* if the *Dénés* had ever heard that the Son of God had come upon earth. She replied: "Yes. Long before the white men appeared amongst us, my mother told me that a star had appeared in the west-south-west, and that many of our people followed it. Since that time we are

separated from each other. The Montagnais are in the south; their arrows are no good. The Loucheux are in the north; their women are unhandy and no good. But the Dénés, the real men, we remained in the Rocky Mountains, and it is not long since we came here to the banks of the Mackenzie."

Not all the Indian legends are as intelligible as this, but they all bear some trace of primeval tradition. The Caribou-eaters thus recited for Bishop Breynat a legend which cannot but remind us of the fall of Lucifer, the Morning Star: "The crow was the most beautiful of all the birds. His voice, when he sang, delighted all the world. But pride entered into his mind. His pride so angered the other birds that they fell upon him, caught him by the neck, rolled him in coal-dust, and nearly choked him. He tried to cry out, but he could only croak. Since that time he is black, and he can only say, 'Cro-a, cro-a.'"

The missionaries, in their intercourse with the Indians, sometimes came upon evidences of the *anima naturaliter Christiana*, which is not a total stranger to the world unseen. An aged Indian one day said to Mgr. Taché: "This is how I lost my thumb. I was hunting in the winter far away from my lodge. I saw some caribou. I drew near and fired. The gun burst and blew off my thumb. I bled very much, and I could not possibly stop the bleeding. I was afraid I was going to die. Then I remembered the Power above, whom you call God, and whom I did not know well. And I said to Him: 'Great Father (Settsié), they say you are almighty; look down upon me and assist me.' Suddenly the bleeding stopped, and I was able to put on my mitten. I made my way to my lodge, where I sank down in weakness. From that time I understood the power of the Almighty, and I have desired to know him. Now, hearing that the Chief of Prayer was here, I have come to you from very far that you may teach me how to please him who saved my life, and who alone keeps us all among the living."

But how often sentiments of true piety towards the true God were stifled in pagan souls by the fear of the evil spirits! The sorcerer said to his victim: "Why trouble yourself about the Good Spirit, who can do nothing but good to you? Never mind him; do you all you can, by prayers and all other means, to win the good graces of the Evil Powers." These terrible powers the poor Indian saw everywhere. They filled the air, they rode the whirlwind, they lashed the waves, they roared in the rapids. It was they who threw the hunters off the scent, and drove home the fishermen empty-handed.

They were the cause of all diseases, striking down even the young. Entangled in a perfect net of superstitions, the Dénés had no confidence except in the charms of the medicine-man or sorcerer. Did this personage really hold communication with the devil? It can only be said that some things happened which look very unlike mere trickery or jugglery. Sorcery among the Dénés was of various kinds—pacifying the spirits, amusing or terrifying an audience, finding things lost, discovering the doings of the absent, hastening the arrival of boats that were watched for, curing the sick, etc. Then there was the malicious kind—casting a spell upon the enemy. For this kind of witchery the medicine-man used to throw off his clothes, put round his head and limbs thongs and fringes of porcupine skin, put on horns and sometimes a tail, and, squatting like an animal, begin to sing, and howl, and curse, and call on all his fetishes, rolling his eyes in frenzy, and altogether behaving in an idiotic and beastly fashion.

What we know of such practices among the Indians has been told by intelligent converts, whose stories have been compared with each other. The missionaries themselves have not witnessed such practices. If they hear the hideous drumming and shouting, and go forward, the sorcerer either is, or pretends to be, unable to continue his incantations. A convert medicine-man, in whom the missionary fully trusted, gave the following account of his own former practices: "When a medicine-man wants to cure a sick person, he keeps a strict fast for three or four days, not eating or drinking anything. Then he gets a special *chounsh*, or medicine-lodge, made ready. Whilst they are making it, he sits in his own tepee, and yet he knows all that is going on outside. He knows in what part of the forest the branches have been cut, and from what kind of trees. When the *chounsh* has been set up at a distance from the camp, and its poles tied together with three cords, the medicine-man, without being told, says, 'All is now ready.' He gets up at once, goes to the *chounsh*, three times makes it reel to and fro, three times walks round it, and then goes in and lies down, still keeping his fast. After a sleep he has the one who is sick on account of his sins brought before him, accompanied by another old sinner who is in good health. The sick man sits down in the *chounsh* and confesses to the medicine-man, who tries to bring out an acknowledgement of all his crimes. After this, with singing and drumming, he brings down the spirit *You-anze* upon the sick man. The chants are very numerous, but all are made up of three

or four sad notes repeated over and over again, with contortions and breathings upon the sick person. Some medicine-men use in their chants some very old words, which have no sense in the tongue which we now speak, but are supposed to be wicked. Such is the word *Soshlouz*, for instance. When the medicine-man knows that the spirit has come upon the sick man, he approaches him, along with his own familiar spirit, and they both make passes over him, and as the spirit has entered into him he falls asleep. Then the *You-anze* takes away the sin and casts it far from him, and at the same time the ailment leaves the sick man. The spirit, taking him up, puts him down again upon the earth that he may continue to live, and with a great cry wakes up the patient perfectly cured. That was how our forefathers used to cure the sick. The medicine-men to-day have no such power."

However that may be, and whatever may be thought of all the "medicine," the pagan Indians even now let few of the events of life pass without having recourse to their traditional superstitious practices.

The normal state of the pagan Indians was very low. It was not at home that Rousseau met his "noble savage." We will pass over other matters, and speak only of cruelty. The Déné, peaceful and timid, and even cowardly before strangers, was cruel to his own flesh and blood, cruel to the weak. Woman was a slave: beaten, exchanged, lent, sold, cast off, mutilated, killed, as men might choose. When the hunter brought home his game, his work was done. All else, all camp work, and all cooking was the woman's task. Before the whites taught them to use dogs, the Indians made the women draw the sleds. Even now, if dogs die, the women are put in harness. The women themselves had such thoughts about their own condition that, when they began to hear the words of the Blackrobe, they took it for granted that the Gospel tidings were not intended for them. In 1856 Father Grandin, trying to console a baptized Montagnais woman who had lost her son, said: "I will prepare you to receive Holy Communion when the Great Chief of Prayer (Bishop Taché) comes here." The poor woman looked so amazed and stupid that Father Grandin asked, "Do you understand me?" She said, "No." He tried again, but she "did not understand." He called a half-breed woman, who knew French, to be his interpreter. He told her that "Grandmother" seemed to understand everything else that he said, but he could not get her to understand about Holy Communion. After a moment

"Grandmother" herself explained: "I did understand the words of the Blackrobe, but I thought there was a mistake; I did not know that a squaw could receive Holy Communion."

At Lake Athabaska, to the same missionary, an Indian man said after an instruction: "Now I see that women have a soul as well as men." But nothing had been said on that subject in the instruction. "No. But when you were telling us about the Son of God, and about his earthly Mother, I saw in my mind that women, too, have a soul, and that heaven is for them as well as for men."

Mary Immaculate, preached by the Catholic Church, raised poor pagan woman from her low estate.

Children among the Indians had almost as much need of Christianity as their mothers. It is true there is a great difference between the Indians and the "civilized" (*i.e.*, European) pagans. The Indian pagans did not try to prevent children from coming into the world. Indeed, sons were welcome, unless they were sickly. A son would be a hunter. When he killed his first bird or hare there was a feast in his honour. When he killed his first caribou he was as good a man as his father. And he very soon began to let his father know that.

But daughters were far from welcome in the wigwams. Even to-day mothers keep them in the background. But they will put forward their boys and tell a visitor, "This is a Dénéyou (a little man)." In former times, if too many daughters came, they were killed. The mother herself disposed of them. The Déné daughters allowed to live were the victims of their cruel parents from the beginning. They were prepared for their future career by being treated like dogs in their childhood. They shared the dog's food and the dog's whip. In famine times the children were eaten, but the daughters came first. The father, as usual, left it to the mother to kill the child. He selected the victim.

Orphan children of either sex were usually abandoned in the woods, quite literally thrown to the wolves. If an orphan were ever allowed to follow the family of some relation, the fate of such a child was far worse even than that of any daughter in the camp.

The treatment of women and children had its counterpart in the treatment of the aged. Not for them the place of honour by the fireside. They, too, were weak, and therefore to be despised and ill-treated. Even at this day our Christian Indians are far from showing due respect to their aged parents. The traveller who goes amongst them will find himself asking: "If such be our Catholics even now,

what must have been the task of the missionaries during the last hundred years ?” In a Déné wigwam, the place of the aged father or grandfather is at the door, where the dogs seek some shelter from the north wind. If he is ever listened to with respect, it is only when he is thought to be near death. There is an old tradition that dying wishes are sacred, but the advice or remonstrance of even the most patriarchal is heard with contempt at ordinary times. Not long ago the missionary Father at Great Slave Lake happened to hear some young hunters discussing an incident of the chase. The father of one of them—in his day the most cunning and successful of hunters—tried to put in a word in favour of the son’s view of the point discussed. But the son said at once: “Shut your —— mouth; you are too old to be able to talk of such matters.” We have known it to happen also that where a family was at table (*i.e.*, on the ground), with hands and mouths full of meat, a grandfather approaching has been told, “There is nothing for you.” And the aged man is well content to get the leavings. He knows what to expect. He knows how he himself treated his elders. He does not wonder when told that he is a great incumbrance, and that he ought to be dead. He will not complain if, on the moving of a camp, he is left behind to die alone in the forest. No wonder that civilized Europe speaks proverbially of what is done “among the Red Indians.”

But we would not be understood as wishing to convey that there can never be found in the pagan Indian a spark of humanity, or pity, or unselfishness, or any vague notion of duty to God on high. And as regards treatment of the old, or other “useless mouths,” we have to remember how often the Indians are reduced to the straits of a town which has endured a long siege. No caribou has appeared for weeks; the lakes are frozen many feet deep. Must not the most feeble, the blind, the lame, and the halt, be left to their fate, if so be the others may save their lives? The answer to the terrible problem was brought when the ministers of Christ and those true Sisters of Charity, the Grey Nuns, came to take upon themselves the care of the aged, the afflicted, and the orphan, besides teaching to all the elementary duties of conjugal, parental, and filial love.

To conclude this chapter, let one historic incident be told, in one respect quite ordinary, in another, of course, quite exceptional. About the year 1900 two pagan young men of the Rocky Mountains were living with their Christian mother. In the autumn, when they were about to move, they reminded her that she was now very near her end,

that they would leave her, and that in the summer moons they would come back and give due burial to her bones, and so her spirit would be at rest. They made a fire for her; they left her a little dried meat; also, at her special request, a little bell from a dog collar and a small drum. Seven months later they came back. Having made fast their canoe, they approached—with the usual prostrations and lamentations—the little wooden enclosure in which, as arranged in all such cases, they expected to find their mother's remains. A feeble moan made them start. The appearance of a skeleton made them turn to run. But the skinny hands and faint voice of their mother besought them to remain. As if begging pardon for being alive, she related how she had spared the dried meat as much as possible, and had next eaten roots, and the bark of trees, and her moccasins, and her cloak. She had kept the fire lighting a long time, in order to frighten away the wolves, whose howling she heard. To get dead branches she crawled on hands and knees, made her bundle, tied it with the thongs of her moccasins, and dragged it over the snow to her fire. At last there was no more dead wood to be found, and the fire went out. The wolves came around howling. She kept them still away by shaking the bell and striking the drum. At last, under the tree trunks, where they found her, she lay down to die.

After hearing their mother's tale, the young men made a stretcher on which they carried her to the canoe. Then they brought her some 200 miles away to the little dwelling of a worthy couple, Boniface and Madeleine Laferté, from whose lips the writer of this book has heard this true story of Indian manners and customs. The rescued woman lived for two years with these hospitable people, again began to see the Blackrobe, at last received holy Viaticum, and died in peace.

Among such people and amid such scenes as we have tried to describe in two chapters apostolic labourers—Bishops, priests, brothers, nuns—have planted the Cross of Christ in the frozen North. It is our purpose now to tell something of the labours, the hardships, the success and failure, the disappointments and consolations of those servants of Christ and of the Church.

CHAPTER V

WINTER IN THE FAR NORTH

THE foreign missionaries are in the front of the far-flung line of the Church Militant. And in what different climes ! Under broiling sun and on a frozen ocean. Anywhere, from equatorial deserts to the Arctic icy mountains, or to oceanic isles. Among cannibals, or with the mild, artistic, and dreamy Hindu.

In all the Church's foreign missions great difficulties have been, and are still, encountered. The difficulties in the Athabaska-Mackenzie Missions are peculiar and exceptional. There has been no great contest with heathenism; such religion as the Dénés had may be said to have laid down its arms from the beginning. There has been no persecution; Indian chiefs are not mandarins, and their country has been very much under the control of those who usually give religious influences "fair play." Nor can complaint be made of indifference on the part of those to whom the Gospel has been preached; speaking generally, it may be said that the Indians have been willing captives of Christ, and fervent converts.

The special difficulties with which their missionaries have had to contend are distance and poverty. The distances are enormous, the means of communication are of the most primitive kind, and the possibilities of utilizing even those primitive means, or of procuring the mere necessities of life, have been slender in the extreme. Hence it is that long journeys and fatiguing manual labours, which may be of only secondary importance in Asia, are the very warp and woof in the frame which is making the Kingdom of Heaven on earth in the Canadian North-West. The missionary in Ceylon may have an exhausting journey in a bullock-cart, but he need not go far before being able to address a large audience, and perhaps of devout Christian people. The missionary in Mackenzie will travel almost fabulous distances on snow-shoes, or in a dog-sled, in order to baptize a few children, to confess and communicate half a dozen Catholics, and to usher one poor Indian soul out of this world in peace. As he tramps through the snow he has the con-

solation of remembering the holy fields of Palestine, trodden for three years by the sacred feet of our Saviour himself, in the blessed odour of whose steps very few were found to follow. The disciple is not above his Master, and he is content with small results until, after much planting and watering, God gives at length plentiful increase.

The Athabaska-Mackenzie missionary travels during a very long winter and a very short summer. He is in the Far North of a country which is cold even in the south. Except for British Columbia—enjoying Pacific breezes and sheltered by the Rocky Mountains from the cutting north wind—the whole of the Canadian Dominion has more than “a nipping and an eager air.” We know that climate does not depend upon mere latitude and longitude, or even the number of hours of sunshine. Mountain and valley, moisture and aridity, the currents of air over sea and land, all have their effect. Canada is near the frozen ocean, and the travelling icebergs of the Arctic and of Hudson Bay. Those great waters, in which Providence collects the world’s rain for the cooling of the torrid zone, send to their neighbouring lands piercing winds which know nothing of the Gulf Stream. Ottawa, which by rules of latitude ought to have the air of Venice, is in a Siberian winter for five months of the year. Western Canada was for long thought outside the bounds of agricultural land, so common is frost even in what we call the summer months. There has been, indeed, some change even in the air since men began to occupy the country and to cultivate the soil. Fruitful prairies have been rescued from the stony earth. Nevertheless, the climate of even the oldest of the prairie provinces is still such that “manacles and Manitoba” may always be thought a severe sentence upon those who offend. Its capital, Winnipeg, on about the same line as Paris, has severer winters than Petrograd.

North of the prairies, in the forests of Athabaska-Mackenzie, spring and autumn are unfamiliar visitors. At Great Slave Lake no one knows them. At the Arctic Circle there is no spring, no autumn, and very little summer. At Fort Good Hope, on the Mackenzie River, a little to the south of the Arctic Circle, the Oblate Fathers of the Mission of our Lady of Good Hope count their seasons thus: *Spring*—May (the thaw begins), June (the ice is gone). In these months the missionary, however hardened a traveller, recites with pleasure the words “Lauda, Jerusalem, Dominum. He shall send out his word, and shall melt them: his winds shall blow, and the waters shall run.” *Summer*—July. *Autumn*—August (fall of the leaf), September

(snow). *Winter*—October (river frozen), November to April. So we see that in those high latitudes the earth wears a mantle of snow for eight or nine months of the year. Over this pall is spread the dark night of the solstice for continuous weeks, and even for unbroken months, as we go farther and farther north. Somewhat to the south—viz., at Great Slave Lake—the sun in December and January just appears above the horizon at midday, looking as cold as the very night itself, and is quickly gone. Between forty and fifty Oblate missionaries share with nine or ten thousand natives those long nights amid snow and ice.

There may be, therefore, on an average one living soul to something like 200 square miles in those regions. The centres known to all explorers, traders, hunters, officials of the Hudson Bay Company, and of the Dominion Post Office, are the treaty forts. Of old the Company's forts deserved their name. Indeed, they were the scenes of many a bloody fight between French and British. At York Factory, near James Bay (two names reminding of an unwise and unhappy Catholic King), one may see even to-day a real fort or fortress. In other places there were some defences against possibly unfriendly natives. But in Athabaska and Mackenzie, Fort Smith, on the Slave River, as you go north from the modern Alberta, Forts Resolution, Simpson, Norman, and Good Hope on the Mackenzie banks, and various others, consist simply of a few houses belonging to the Company, a few huts for the Indians in the Company's service, the premises of the Catholic Mission, and perhaps also of the Protestant "Church Missionary Society." In some places the Grey Nuns are in charge of an orphanage or hospital.

Twice a year the Catholic Indians come in great numbers to the mission. In the season when the ice has broken up they come in their canoes to barter their furs at the Company's office, and they remain for the fulfilment of their religious duties. At Christmas, though it is indeed "the winter wild," they come very joyfully over leagues of snow to honour "the heaven-born Child who, all meanly wrapt, in the rude manger lies." These are the seasons of great consolation for the missionaries, when they are able to instruct, advise, and reprove their docile disciples, and send them back to their rude homes strengthened by "the medicine from on high, which makes the heart good."

But not all his flock can come to the priest. He must go to them—to the aged, the infirm, the mothers with small children. Now it is in the long winter season that it is least

difficult to visit those scattered Christians who so ardently desire the presence of the Blackrobe. To form some idea of the meaning of those "pastoral visits" we have to imagine ourselves on the continent of Europe before there were cities or villages or high-roads. Suppose Italy, Switzerland, Spain, France, Belgium, and Holland to be the Vicariate Apostolic of one Bishop. And suppose from the Mediterranean to the North Sea a wild and unexplored land, where all the lakes and rivers are frozen, and all the scene is snow-white, under a temperature anywhere from twenty to fifty centigrade degrees of cold. There are hamlets or houses, say, at Madrid, Marseilles, Lyons, Bordeaux, Paris, Cambrai, and its very near neighbour, Brussels! But between these resting-places there is little likelihood of meeting even one living soul; there is no inn, no rest-house, no railway, no road, no visible track, no available water-course. There are simply in those widely-scattered settlements some few long-haired Gauls or Goths, Christians who long to see their priest, or pagans who may be willing this time to accept the good word from the lips of the Chief of Prayer. Our northern missionaries, marching laboriously day and night on such a quest, when they see a few stunted trees, may perhaps say to themselves: "The cypress! And in the cemetery of a world!"

Such are the circumstances in which live and move the Bishops and priests of Athabaska-Mackenzie. The Bishop takes years to make the "pastoral visitation" of the missions under his charge. A single journey between two missions—if the traveller meets with no accident, and is not completely weather-bound—takes from four to six days. Bishop Grandin, in a three years' absence from the central mission, was not able to go beyond the Arctic Circle nor into the Peace River district. Another Bishop in those regions, like St Wilfrid of Ripon, "a quick walker all his life," especially on snow-shoes, was Mgr. Clut. (The last letter of his name is not usually sounded; but Father Tempier, the first companion of the Founder of the Oblates, always called him *Mon frère Cluthe* in the scholasticate at Marseilles.) Bishop Clut allowed himself four years for a round of the undivided Vicariate, but he was always obliged to leave some missions unvisited. The rackets or snow-shoes (which he put on at Autun, for an object lesson in 1869-70) were his ordinary carriage, the dog-sled his only Pullman car. And during his journeys he ate much pemmican—at least, as much as he could—and for a true and full description of pemmican let the gentle reader be referred



GETTING OVER THE ICE-HUMMOCKS

to the eloquent General Sir William Butler, who had bravely faced many difficulties and dangers in his day. Pemmican is pemmican, he declares, and he is not able to say more.

The Right Rev. Bishop Grouard, who has survived much pemmican and much travelling, describing the sleds, names the weight which each of them, drawn by four dogs, may carry—viz., 400 pounds—if the track be passably good. The animals, which are harnessed in single file to these sleds, look to European eyes more like wolves than dogs. Of course, horses would be useless in the Far North. They could not be fed, even if there were roads on which to drive them. The dogs are guided by a few Indian or French words, and sometimes by the whip. The driver uses no reins, which would be very much in the way both of himself and of his “steeds,” which very often race to the jingling of their bells.

The best roads in the Far North are winding and narrow paths through the woods made by the passage of Indians or moose. Near the forts there may be some such well-beaten tracks. Elsewhere the snow quickly covers up every trail, and Bishop Charlebois warns us that it is only the experienced traveller who can sound the snow he walks on and discover underneath it the hardened path made by sleds that have passed.

It is quite the usual experience of new travellers to have to “blaze a trail”—i.e., make a road for themselves—by literally hacking a way through forest and underwood and over fallen trees.

The greatest danger for men and dogs are the frozen rivers. These have no resemblance to a frozen lake or river at home. Bishop Grandin, in one of his letters of years ago, explains how the river freezes gradually, the most northerly part being first taken. As the rivers are flowing towards the Arctic, the advancing waters are thus poured over the frozen surface, and also thrown back upon themselves, and thrown wide, and frozen in their turn into all sorts of shapes and sizes—large blocks, and hillocks, and gullies, and hummocks of ice, whose corners and points and sides cut the dogs' feet or the snow-shoe as if with the edge of a sword.

But let the sled-driver who has got past the rough be on his guard against the danger of the smooth. The inviting glossy surface may be the thin ice which will send dogs and sled and driver and all his belongings into the deep water, where the meeting ice blocks close over him. Such has been the fate of many a one. Such the fate of a few Oblate missionaries, and in particular of one who so lost

his life in September, 1920. An escape from such a fate has been described by Father Dupire and Brother Lecreff. On December 1, 1890, they were coming, ascending the Slave River, from Fort Resolution on the Great Slave Lake to Lake Athabaska. Father Dupire, taking his turn, was seated in the sled; Brother Lecreff was running behind holding the steering rope. Over a doubtful-looking reach of the river two Indian sleds had passed in safety. The missionaries followed on. Suddenly the ice gave way. Father Dupire jumped forward, landed on firm ice, knelt down, seized hold of the leading dog just before the rushing water could carry him under the ice; then, with the help of the Indians, who had come back in all haste, rescued all the dogs and the sled, and finally Brother Lecreff, who, even in the water, had fortunately held on to the rope. There were forty degrees of frost at the time, and in two minutes the poor Brother was more like a little iceberg than a man.

On the great lakes there are other dangers or hardships to be met with in the winter journeys. The surface of a lake, swept by the wind, is often as polished and smooth as glass, and so slippery that the sled has to be held back by main force so that it may not race faster than the dogs at their best. To ride in the bracing air over such a surface would be quite delightful if it were not for the risks. On any of the lakes you never know when a warning explosion—as if there were artillery in the depths—will tell that a great abyss is about to open before your feet. The dogs on such an occasion lie down in fear and trembling, and cannot be got to move without a vigorous use of the whip. Of course, the traveller must either turn back or make a great round in order to avoid the crevasse or chasm which yawns before him. And new dangers for him quickly arise on such an inland sea. Perhaps there are fifty degrees of frost (centigrade). The gaps made in the ice are soon filled, the pressure from every side is increased, little icebergs are formed standing up stiffly many feet in height, and blocking the whole line by which the traveller wishes to pass. There is no possibility of getting round them. The hatchet has to be used in order to cut a way through this wall of ice, and sometimes the traveller has to climb over such frozen hillocks.

A third and still more trying experience on the northern lakes is to live through what the early *coureurs des bois* expressively called a *poudrerie*. To call it a snow-storm gives little idea of it. It is like the sand-storm of the desert, when the simoom blows fiercely. The farther north we go the less frequent is this blinding snow-storm, but the more

fiercely it rages and the longer. This blizzard, as if some giant power in anger, gathers up the snow from all the face of the earth, and flings it widely to all points of the compass. Only the depths of the forest or the Eskimo's igloo can give shelter from such a tempest. Woe to the inexperienced or ill-provided traveller whom it finds upon the lake. He finds himself suddenly in what may be called an absolute night of whiteness. Neither heaven nor earth can be seen. The storm will probably not go down for a whole day, and there is nothing visible to guide one's steps, and the cold is intense. To struggle on blindly against the wind seems the only hope to reach the shore and shelter, but after hours of vain marching one has gone round in a circle, for the blasts are blowing from all points of the heaven. Bishop Grouard tells us of his own experience on only a small lake, and in only a slight snow-storm, not a real *poudrerie* or blizzard. On January 20, 1895, he was in a bay of White Fish Lake, with Father Dupé, Brother Jean Marie Lecreff, and a young Indian named Felix. They were giving the Bishop a lift in the sled. Father Dupé was marching in front, beating out a track for the dogs. The Brother was holding on behind to guide the sled and keep it from bumping. Felix had charge of a little sled with provisions. Suddenly the snow-flakes fell faster and thicker. The wind rose, and carried clouds of snow all round about the travellers. Brother Jean Marie noticed that Father Dupé was going wide of the trail, and ran forward to set him right. The sled, left without the guiding hand, bumped against a frozen bank, heeled over, and threw the Bishop in the snow. In an instant he was on his feet, and set the sled going straight once more. He hoped to be able to help in finding and following the trail. But the snow lashed his face as if with whipcords, and blinded his eyes. For the ecclesiastical mind it was the fulfilling of Psalm cxlvii, *Lauda, Jerusalem*: "He giveth snow like wool: scattereth mists like ashes. He sendeth his crystal like morsels: who shall stand before the face of his cold?" The poor Bishop wiped his eyes, trying to keep them open: the eyelids froze together. Turning his back to the storm, he sought freedom from those scales, reminding him of St Paul's, but they formed again. Young Felix overtook the three Palefaces, and said: "We must go on, or we shall be frost-bitten; let us march in the face of the wind, and we shall reach the bank." To face the wind in such a snow-storm was not easy, and it was not made easier, said the Bishop, "by the fact that the driven snow came against us furiously from the four cardinal points

at the same time. What would become of us if the storm lasted? Recommending ourselves to God, to the blessed Virgin, and our guardian angels, we struggled on, bending our heads before the blast, and holding one arm over our eyes to keep them open. Whither we are going no one knows. But we so struggle on for hours. At last we seem to see some dark object. Can it be the land? It is. *Deo gratias*. But whereabouts are we? Not even the keen-eyed Indian can tell us, though he knows so well the shores of White Fish Lake. At all events, we are now able to make a fire, and to get something to eat, and to let the storm go down, and to perceive that our faces have been severely 'burned' by the cold. Not a nose has escaped, not a cheek. The Indian boy especially, being beardless, is in a sad state. But such wounds are only skin deep, and are healed by the growth of a new skin," said Bishop Grouard in concluding his story.

On the great lakes, justly called inland seas, winter travellers do not venture in small companies. But with all their thoughtful care and mutual help they cannot avoid hardships, and some of them lose their lives. The late Bishop Grandin, in a night upon Great Slave Lake, came very near his death, and was actually given up for lost. He was intending a journey southward by the Slave River to Lake Athabaska, in the north-east corner of the modern Alberta. In the beginning of December, 1863, he was at Fort Providence, on the north-west bank of Great Slave Lake. On December 6, as one of the company's men was going that way, the Bishop set out for Grosse Isle, or Big Island, where he arrived in the evening of December 8. It had been a sad feast day of the Immaculate Conception for the Bishop. He had not been able to say Mass, and he had so hurt one of his feet with the snow-shoes as almost to tear off the nail of a great toe, and to make part of his journey agonizing. On December 10, as two of the Company's men, with an Indian guide, were setting out for Fort Resolution, at the mouth of the Slave River, the Bishop and his boy, Baptiste, accompanied them, or rather followed slowly in their track across Great Slave Lake. There were many trying ice mounds on the lake, and the Bishop's bad foot made it specially difficult for him to get over them. In the evening of December 14 he was almost within sight of his destination (St Joseph's Mission, Fort Resolution), and he took to his dog-sled, the dogs being able to follow in the trail of the company's men, though not to keep their sled in sight. Suddenly a violent snow-storm arose, blotting out heaven and earth, the

travellers' faces being buffeted and blinded by the snow which fell from above, and by that which was blown from the surface of the lake. In a little while there was no trail to be seen on the clean wind-swept ice. The direction of the wind, which might have guided the Bishop and his boy, changed like the proverbial weathercock. For hours they went on, letting the dogs take their own course. There was no sign on any side of shore or island. To repeated shouts for help there was no reply except the sounding storm. Darkness came down whilst the blizzard continued. The Bishop and his little sacristan were lost at night upon a frozen sea. It was evidently folly to proceed; they might be moving farther away from all hope of rescue. The Bishop and his boy took it in turns to unyoke the howling dogs, so as to make of the sled some sort of shelter. It was a risky and slow operation, for it meant uncovering the hands. Whilst Bishop or boy tried to untie straps and loosen knots, the other walked, and stamped, and beat his sides to keep from freezing. At length with sled, and dogs, and snow-shoes, and blankets, some kind of defence was raised against the wild and piercing wind. The Bishop seated himself on the ice, with his back to the upturned sled, and took the boy on his lap. Each was but a poor protection to the other, for the cold was still intense and the wind made it a hard task to hold the blankets safely. The little boy asked to make his confession, and both penitent and confessor prepared for death. Still they duly clung to life, and struggled to live, and not to fall asleep. In a little while they stood up to walk on, as if trying to escape from death that followed after. Their dinner had been very slight, for they were near the end of their journey and of their provisions. Yet the Bishop was not hungry, nor did he feel any longer the injury to his foot. As he walked and walked, sometimes stopping when no longer so cold, he saw the boy was falling asleep in spite of every effort. To save his life he must be allowed to rest somehow. Fortunately a snow-drift was reached. The Bishop burrowed in it with his snow-shoes, spread the blankets in that little snow-house, and made the boy lie down inside. Then he placed the dogs at the corners of the "lodge," and heaped up more snow all round on the outside. Lastly, he himself got inside as well as he could, but there was no third person to afford him warmth or to surround him with a protecting snow-bank to keep out the piercing wind. His exertions had melted all the snow on his clothes, but now, in his cave of the winds, the frost quickly encased him in ice. His companion was

in the same state. They knew not where to put their hands to escape frost-bite. In such a bed the night was passed, not in sleep or rest, but in striving to keep up some vital warmth. At last, in the dawn, the Bishop emerged from his icy blankets to look around once more. He thought he saw land at some distance. With boy and dogs he started off again in the hope of being able to kindle a fire. One of the Bishop's feet and the boy's two feet were getting "taken" by the frost. They could not put on their snow-shoes. At length they reached land; with great difficulty they lighted a fire. There was no food to cook, but there was a possibility of making tea. Before there was time to drink it they saw two sleds on the lake and they were saved! Their shouts were heard by the drivers of the sleds (no other than the father and uncle of the little boy), who had been sent in search of them from the Fort and the Mission of Resolution. In fact, the place where the Bishop had reached solid ground was the very isle on which the mission-house stood. The rescuers were starting with the light; to have set out during the snow-storm in the night would have been mere folly. During the night, Fathers Gascon and Petitot had searched the borders of the lake, firing off guns, and waving burning brands. They could do no more—unless shed tears. Once found, the Bishop in a quarter of an hour was in the chapel of St Joseph's Mission, Fort Resolution. His Indian rescuers wondered he had not been frozen to death. Father Petitot was saying Mass for him, and was hardly able to finish when he saw for certain that it was not a Mass of requiem. The Bishop next said Mass himself, and we can well imagine how the rest of that December 15, 1863, was spent at Fort Resolution by those "men with the hearts of vikings and the simple faith of a child." The adventure on Great Slave Lake was not a quite exceptional adventure. Mgr. Taché, in his *Vingt Années de Missions*, tells us that on the last day of that same year (1863) Father Lestanc spent the whole day and great part of the night in his dog-sled under a biting north wind on Lake Winnipeg (in Manitoba), and reached his destination, Fort Alexander, only at two o'clock in the morning.

An Indian sled of their own was not at the disposal of the missionaries in the early days. They were very grateful to the Company's officials, who gave them room for a blanket and a little vestment-box in a sled which might be going north or south. As one good turn deserves another, the missionary thus obliged would "run in front of the dogs," beating down the snow. When obliged to

travel by himself, the missionary had to march for days carrying his "chapel," and blanket, and provisions on his back. So marched for years over the snowy wastes Bishops Taché, Grandin, Faraud, Clut, Grouard, and others, not to mention the numerous missionary Fathers.

When it became possible to have a sled and a few dogs, the extent of the relief to the missionary was simply the taking of the load off his shoulders. The quantity of dried fish required to feed four dogs for a week or so, food for one or two human beings, a portable "chapel," a hatchet, a gun, and a blanket, have to find room in the sled. The sled requires a strong and steady arm behind to steer it clear of tree stumps, frozen corners, or shelving banks of snow. It requires also a vigorous walker in front, for the dogs must have a good lead if they are to run well. Happy is the missionary who is helped by a lay Brother, whether as steersman or as avant-courier. An ordinary traveller, a moneyed man, would require two sleds (one for provisions, etc., and one for himself), eight dogs, and three men.

After much economy and much hard work the Fathers have been able of late years to provide a special sled for their Bishops. The inventor of this *episcopal carriole*, as he calls it, is very proud of his work, and thinks it quite a "swell" affair. The moose-skin of which it is made is the best to be had, and it is stretched with extra care. His lordship can be comfortably wrapped up in blankets in this first-class carriage. He is so near the ground that no bones are broken when he is thrown out. When the jolting has reached the limit—for it is a case of "when taken, to be well shaken"—and when the rattling and scraping noise has sufficiently deafened the Right Reverend Prelate, he can always call a halt, change places with another, and let that other toboggan in his stead.

But all Northern travellers ought to be ready to march on the rackets or snow-shoes. They are long and broad, according to the depth and yielding nature of the snow likely to be found. The use of them will never remind anyone of the pleasant use of tennis rackets. They keep the feet so wide apart, and they demand such an effort and a careful balancing of the whole body, that they make one think rather of the rack, or the Little Ease, of the Tower of London. Good Bishop Grandin had served an eight years' apprenticeship to the rackets when he wrote as follows: "On the second day my feet were already blistered all over. At the end of the third day they were like jelly. And rheumatic pains increased my troubles. Whenever in the

morning, or even after a short rest, we had to start again, I suffered terrible pains which I could not hide from others. A walking-stick would have been very useful to me, but on the ice a stick would have required its own racket! My only relief was, whenever we camped, to wash my feet in snow, for they seemed to be always burning."

Another trying result of a march on snow-shoes—and one which may prostrate even the experienced Indian brave quite suddenly—is *le mal de raquette*. Perhaps it ought to be called rackets, something worse than rickets (rachitis). Its victims feel as much pain as if someone with a powerful pair of pincers were trying to dislocate the hip bones, or were twisting the sinews of the legs with sudden jerks. Such victims cannot help screaming or moaning, and they would lie down and go no farther if it were not that in the snow of the North, just as in the sand of the Sahara, one must march forward or perish.

Both for the snow-shoes and for the sled, from 25 to 35 centigrade degrees below freezing-point is what pleases the traveller. If too soft, the snow clings to the sled; if too hard, it impedes progress in another way. In the favourable temperature, and in the dry, bracing atmosphere of the North, the young and able-bodied voyager, in his light and warm deerskin coat, can march on for days and weeks quite gaily, stopping only for a hasty meal, and for a sleep under the canopy of heaven. But the missionary is not always an athlete, and the temperature is not always the most favourable. Sometimes there are 40, 50, or even 60 centigrade degrees of frost. The air is more than "bracing" then. The voyager can only keep going on and on, struggling against sleep which would know no waking.

At other times there may be only 15 degrees of frost, or less, and then the traveller perspires, and the perspiration is frozen upon his body. The snow under foot is melted as he walks; then, getting between his snow-shoes and his moccasins, it is frozen into needles, which wound and blister. The network itself of the snow-shoes becomes saturated and soft, and tortures the poor voyager. But worst of all his tortures is thirst. In truth, the modern apostle of Indians and Eskimos shares all the sufferings of the great Apostle of the Gentiles: "in journeying often, in perils in the wilderness, in much watching, in cold and nakedness, in hunger and thirst" (2 Cor. xi 26). Those who have to tramp the snow-fields on rackets often experience the fate of Tantalus himself. Their thirst consumes them, and yet they have only to put hand or lips to the cool and inviting snow. But

they are fully aware that to swallow even one mouthful at such a time would be fatal. Fathers Laity and Decorby were two valiant missionaries of the North-West in the second generation, their student days at Autun having been round about 1865. They made familiar to those who came after themselves such names as Fort Pelly, now almost forgotten. Father Laity was one of those who could tell about thirst. He was a tall, hardy, able-bodied Breton, and so attached to his Athabaska and Mackenzie missions that, in his one visit to France, after thirty-six years in the North, when he saw the snow on a mountain in Savoy as the train rolled past, he said: "That is too much for me; I must go back to my own." So back he went in 1903. In 1915 he died at St Joseph's Mission, Fort Resolution, Great Slave Lake, invoking the clemency of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Not long before his death he told something of the sufferings caused by thirst. He said: "I have walked many hundreds of miles on the snow-shoes—for instance, between Lake Athabaska and Fort Vermilion on the Peace River—sometimes visiting the Indian camps, sometimes procuring food for the orphans and the Grey Nuns. In the beginning these journeys were very trying, when we were no better provided than with moose-skin garments, which crumpled and creased as the perspiration hardened in the frost, and so kept us quite bent as we walked along. I have walked thirty-eight hours without rest in order to escape dying of hunger. One day I reached Lake Athabaska completely exhausted. My teeth were so bad that I had not been able to bite the ball of pemmican which I was carrying, and I had lost my steel and could not make a fire to melt it. Entering the mission-house I fell on the floor, and Mgr. Faraud thought I was dying. My leg was strained and quite blue. So I know what the *mal de raquette* is, too. And yet, I tell you, it is nothing compared with thirst. One may have to go on and on for hours, not able to stop and melt a handful of snow, or even ice, too thick to be broken by the hatchet. How often I envied the dogs that lapped up the snow! When it became possible to swallow a mouthful of water, it seemed at first as if an ice ball took the place of one's brain. Ah! thirst is the *experimentum crucis* of our missionary life. The other sufferings do not count. I have tried to bear them all for the love of God and of those poor souls whom God has given me for my spiritual children."

But enough has been said about the winter and the dark.

CHAPTER VI

THE MIDNIGHT SUN

FOR nine months in the Far North the dead world is wrapped in its winding sheet of snow. At last, by the unseen Hand, ever present, the pall is lifted up, the fountains of the great deep of life are opened, the snow and ice are borne far away, the fair face of Mother Earth appears, the living waters flow in river and in lake, the sap of life begins to rise in forest and in prairie. The sun "stands still in the midst of heaven, and hastes not to go down the space of a whole day," the noon continuing even at midnight to console the recluses of the Arctic Circle for their prolonged period of darkness. Somewhat south—for instance, at Great Slave Lake—the twilight and the rosy-fingered dawn join hands, and are "as lovely as a Lapland night" (so Wordsworth might sing); and by their united efforts they paint the heavens in colours so brilliant, many-hued, and pearly that if a painter succeeded in placing them on canvas the ordinary European would confidently declare that such a light was never seen on land or sea, and was but the consecration of a poet's dream.

If the sun comes quickly, with its signal to rise from sleep, nature seems to know that the sun's disappearance before long will bring again the night and stagnation. Hence there is a marvellous quickness of growth and a swift advance to maturity. One may almost see the leaves pushing out and the wild blossoms forming into berries. The words of the prophet Isaiah (lxvi 8) come to the lips of one who looks: "Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen the like? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day?" There are dangers indeed and difficulties. The earth is still frozen beneath the surface, and may kill the roots. There may be storms, and there may be drought. There may be a couple of hours of frost coming between two hot days. Nevertheless, it does happen that in less than three months cereals and vegetables are sown and gathered in abundance.

In the short glorious summer of the North the creatures of fur and feather also come into life, or come forward to enjoy the "fresh woods and pastures new." In the early

days in North America the settlers moving westward sometimes had to stand still for days whilst the buffaloes went past, whether north or south. In the Far North even now every summer sees two armies in peaceful ranks invading the cool yet sunny moss-lands of the Arctic shore. The caribou come in herds and rear their fawns. Wild geese and ducks and swans come in countless flocks and hatch their eggs. Their duty done, these armies turn once more to the south. The fowls of the air and of the water re-form their ranks, the elders in the van clearing the way for the newly-fledged, and all with noisy cries or joyful melodies making known their departure for the happy skies of California, Louisiana, and Mexico.

The swift summer of the North, with its sunshine, and its songs of birds, and its flowers, would be so beautiful as perhaps to make one forget the sad season of darkness if it were not for one painful drawback. In the midst of the gayest moments, says the proverb, *surgit amari aliquid*. In the month of May, even before the ice has gone, the mosquitoes come to life, and they are a plague of Egypt as long as the warm weather lasts. They pierce the skin and suck the blood, and they show a special preference for the blood of the white man. They attack in myriads; their number makes them all-powerful. Woe to the man without a mosquito-net! "The mosquitoes had spared us on the Athabaska River," writes Mgr. Grouard of a certain journey; "but they had appointed a rendezvous in the forest to attack us without mercy, and to give no quarter. There was nothing for it but to bend our heads, and to force our way through the mass at a rapid pace. With considerable loss of blood on both sides we succeeded in reaching the banks of the Peace River, where at length we were able to breathe freely."

The wasp and the gad-fly are also known in the North, but a still more formidable enemy of man is the almost invisible insect called the *brulot*, because its sting is like the burn caused by a lighted match. The finest net ever made cannot keep out these terrible little creatures, which are found in multitudes inside our clothing and our blankets, as if sent specially to devour us, or at least to chastise us severely for our sins.

Well, in the midst of all this feverish activity of animated nature the missionary, too, takes advantage of the summer sun. He prepares for the winter, which is never far away. He brings out his sled from the tool-house. He sees that his dogs are made ready for the road. As in the winter

he travels on priestly expeditions for the spiritual benefit of his flock, so in the summer he has to attend to those temporal affairs which bring the strictly missionary work within the bounds of possibility. The supplies needed in the various missions by priests, nuns, orphans, and the sick have to be got together in haste, and mostly, of course, from great distances. Priests or nuns may also have to travel from one mission to another, or to another country. Movement, then, is perpetual during the short summer along the broad, magnificent, and dangerous highway of the North which from Great Slave Lake to the Arctic Ocean is called the Mackenzie River. In reality, the Mackenzie is but one portion of an immense body of water which rolls uninterruptedly from its source in the Rocky Mountains to Mackenzie Bay. From Mount Brown in the Rockies to Lake Athabaska it is called the Athabaska River; from Lake Athabaska the Slave River leads it into Great Slave Lake, and thenceforward it is the Mackenzie. On the right and on the left as it goes through Alberta, and farther north, it receives the waters of ever so many other rivers, the most noticeable on the left being the Rivers Peace, Clearwater, Salt, Hay, and Liard (this last being itself swollen by the waters of the Nelson, the Peel, and the Arctic Red River); and on the right the La Biche, the House, and the Bear Rivers. The great volume of water which from source to ocean might be called the Mackenzie, or at least the Athabaska-Mackenzie, is wide and deep, and of so powerful a current that after draining the overflow of Little Slave Lake, Lake La Biche, and others, it passes through even Lake Athabaska and Great Slave Lake without losing its individuality. The Athabaska is often a couple of miles wide, the Mackenzie five or six. Out of Great Slave Lake the Mackenzie issues through a royal gateway not less than twenty-five miles broad. It spreads again to fifteen before joining its delta in the Far North, and to no less than seventy-five miles when entering the ocean. The Mackenzie and its tributaries roll forward 2,500 miles of navigable water.

The varied magnificence of the mighty Mackenzie and Athabaska is no less remarkable than their huge expanse. From the Rockies to MacMurray, in Alberta, the banks of the Athabaska are often steep cliffs. From MacMurray to Lake Athabaska the river flows through a rather level country. The Slave River, going north from Lake Athabaska, waters a great prairie. The Mackenzie proper, from Great Slave Lake to Fort Simpson, makes its bed amid the spurs of the Rocky Mountains, which stretch out to meet

it here. From Fort Simpson to the Arctic the broad river may be said to have the very mountains for its banks. It is the fulfilment of the Scriptural phrase about the beginnings of the world: "In the midst of the hills the waters shall run." At one point their granite masses gather together so closely as to seem to threaten the arrest of the torrent there. The actual result is that the waters rush with double force between parallel ramparts that show natural towers and battlements with yawning dungeons. A little farther, in front of the Fort and the Mission of Good Hope, the Mackenzie rolls itself round in a circle, which surely forms one of the most glorious sights to be seen upon earth. Still farther north, from the Arctic Circle to the ocean, the river, very wide and straight, moves majestically on between the far-off lines of shining glaciers and rugged mountains.

Over the whole course of the Athabaska and Mackenzie until we reach this Farthest North there is an unending succession of primeval forests. Nothing is heard in these forests but the falling water in some wild ravine; nothing is seen save the moose or the bear that comes to drink.

When the snow melts upon the heights, Peace River and Liard River are bridged in many places by trees of every sort and size brought down root and branch on the bosom of the flood from the sides of the Rocky Mountains. Peace River sends forward its burden to Slave River, the Liard to the Mackenzie, and so on every bank, even to the Arctic Ocean, this rich flotsam and jetsam supplies the firewood for the long winter, which is never far behind. In that same season of the melting of the snows the Mackenzie, as muddy as the rivers of the Asiatic North, so overflows as to change the face of the country. It makes new islands, swallows up old ones, fills up the dried channels, washes away the river banks, and enlarges the bounds of many lakes. All this work is done with an astounding rapidity and force by the flood newly set free. Those who have seen the Athabaska-Mackenzie waters are not surprised to hear that the Indian name for them is *Naotcha*, the Giant River, or River of Giant Shores. Alas! this great giant, so entrancing a sight to all new-comers, has devoured many an old-timer, including four of our Oblate missionaries. No less than five others lost their lives in the lesser rivers which pay him tribute. The two latest victims, Fathers Brémond and Brohan, went down in the rapids of Fort Smith, to the south of Great Slave Lake, near the Albertan border. But the mention of these losses gives no idea of the number of times when the missionaries have had providential escapes from

death. Like St Paul, they encounter perils in the water and perils in the wilderness, and there is hardly one of them who does not tell of some danger out of which he was rescued by the almost visible hand of God.

We have named the rapids ! A rather terrifying word for those who know the history of either the fur traders or the missionaries in the Canadian North-West. To carry supplies overland past the rapids, and in later times to shoot some of the rapids, even in cargo boats, has been a laborious and a dangerous work, demanding all the courage, the inventive powers, and the resource of fur traders or missionaries, and of their Indian guides. From Niagara, the mother of the St Lawrence, to Bloody Fall, on the Coppermine River in the Farthest North, the rapids are beyond counting. The orographical map, showing in the east the Laurentians, in the west the Rocky Mountains (which the Indians call the backbone of the world), and the Height of Land at varying points between, will afford some explanation of the numerous rapids, cascades, and cataracts which dot the map of North America. A cataract (a sheer fall into an abyss) or a cascade (the water tumbling from rock to rock) defies the power and the wit of man to pass through it, either up or down. But a rapid may often be conquered by the skill of a pilot (at least, of an Indian pilot) and by main strength. Nevertheless, not very numerous are the rapids where no boatman or barque has come to grief.

The Mackenzie is exceptionally free from rapids, having only three or four in its whole course from Great Slave Lake to the ocean. One of these is in the lowlands, the other in the highlands, and they are easily negotiated. Even a steamer can make its way from the delta of the Mackenzie against the current southward to Great Slave Lake, cross the lake, enter the Slave River, and steam on to Fort Smith at the sixtieth degree of latitude, the southern boundary of the Mackenzie Vicariate, the northern boundary of the civil province of Alberta. There are some enterprising men who look forward to the day when ocean steamers will come through Behring Strait into Mackenzie Bay, and will reach Fort Smith as easily as they now reach Montreal. Their season, however, will be very short, and a great deal of dredging will first have to be done, for there are portions of the route where only flat-bottomed boats can now pass.

The Fort Smith rapids and cascades, continuing for twenty-five miles, are such as cannot even be leaped by the white Mackenzie salmon, which is never found to the south of those falls.

Passing the Fort Smith rapids, travellers at first used to venture in boats close to the right bank, not without many accidents, and at best three very trying and long portages. In later times a path was made through sixteen miles of forest on the left bank, and this one portage brings the voyager past the whole chain of those rapids. From Fort Smith up the river southward to Lake Athabaska there are only two rapids, not very risky. From Lake Athabaska to Fort MacMurray all is plain sailing on the Athabaska River.

But this MacMurray in the modern Alberta has been the scene of the toughest of all tasks for three successive Bishops—Mgr. Faraud, Mgr. Grouard, and, until lately, Mgr. Breynat. MacMurray is at the meeting of the waters of the Athabaska from the south and the Clearwater River from the east, and at the point where the voyager going north knows at length that he has got past the rapids of the Athabaska. Whenever you hear such a voyager speak of “the rapids” you know that he means those, as if all others were nothing in comparison. The first of these, in which the fall of water is heard like thunder long before it is seen, is called Grand Rapid.

In 1867 Bishop Faraud described Grand Rapid, in which he had a narrow escape from drowning. “The Athabaska in this part,” he wrote, “is as broad as the Rhone. Overhead on each side are immense, high, overhanging rocks, which seem threatening to bury traveller and boat in the waters. Similar blocks, undermined and broken off by weather and wave and ice, form an island in the middle of the river. In the sand that has accumulated on that island great fir trees grow. The river forces its way with immense speed on either side of this island. Below the island the two arms of the river, dashing against each other and against the high cliffs of their embankment, make a noise like that of a hundred cannon firing together!”

To avoid these rapids of the Athabaska, of which they heard from the Indians, early voyagers were accustomed to reach what is now MacMurray by the La Loche or Methy portage, in the present Saskatchewan. La Loche was the gateway of the Far North. It is a long and broad plateau at the Height of Land, or Great Divide, whence some rivers flow to Hudson Bay and others to the Arctic Ocean. It stretches from Clearwater River, which runs north, to Lake La Loche, a tributary of Hudson Bay. The men of the Hudson Bay Company came to La Loche by a north-east route from York Factory (Port Nelson) by the Churchill

and other rivers and various lakes. Two or three of the early missionaries followed the same route. Another route to La Loche was by two stages from Montreal. The first brought the explorer or missionary to what is now Manitoba, where on the banks of the Red River, the new city of Winnipeg, on the left or west bank, faces the older city of St Boniface on the right. Champlain in 1615 followed the Ottawa River, Lake Nipissing, and Lake Superior. La Vérandrye in 1731 went all the way to the Lake of the Woods and Lake Winnipeg. Such a journey, even in the nineteenth century, took two months, as many missionaries and the Grey Sisters know. In 1863 it was possible to go by rail from Montreal to St Paul, Minnesota, where the late Archbishop Ireland, when a young priest, rendered many services to such missionaries as Mgr. Taché and Father Lacombe. From St Paul "Red River carts" took travellers to St Boniface. In 1880 the Canadian Pacific Railway reached Winnipeg. The second stage of the journey to Portage La Loche was made from Fort Garry (Winnipeg) in birch-bark canoe or heavier boat by the Red River, Lake Winnipeg, the Saskatchewan, and other rivers and lakes too numerous to name, before coming to Lake Île à la Crosse, and finally through Buffalo Lake to Lake La Loche. There the great tableland is reached where the canoe is no longer a help, but a burden to be carried. The portage there to reach MacMurray on the Athabaska River means a journey of sixty miles. No wonder that voyagers called La Loche the Great or Grand Portage, even after their experience of thirty-six other portages between Lake Winnipeg and La Loche. Those who left Winnipeg at the end of May could count on reaching Lake Athabaska (north of MacMurray) in August.

We are speaking in this chapter of the various circumstances of the labours and journeys of the missionaries in the long days of the short summer in the North. The Hudson Bay Company was accustomed to send twelve barges every year to their northern forts or stations. On one of the twelve, Protestant and Catholic missionaries were allowed to take passage. Two-thirds of the available space on the barge was assigned to the Protestant missionaries, with their families and their supplies. The Catholic priests and Brothers and Grey Nuns did as best they could with one-third. Of course, the Company regulated all questions of fare, and of the times for starting and stopping, and took no responsibility for the possible loss or damage of goods, or injury to person. In the North-West the Indians are paid in kind

—tea, sugar, tobacco, powder and ball, linen, and various tools. How hard to bring a quantity of these and all that was needed for the mission staff, and perhaps for an orphanage, in various missions farther north than MacMurray! Yet the time came when the accommodation provided by the Company's barges was no longer available. In 1869 the Company was bought out by the Canadian Government. Their monopoly of the fur trade ceased—at least, in theory—and so they had to pay more for the furs. They began to cut down other expenses. Already in the autumn of 1868 Governor MacTavish wrote to Bishop Faraud that he would have to make his own arrangements in future for the carriage of his supplies into the North. It might have seemed a death-blow to the Athabaska-Mackenzie missions. But Mgr. Taché at St Boniface had foreseen it, and had prepared to meet it by a plan which Mgr. Faraud afterwards called a stroke of genius, and which saved the missions of the Far North. The problem was to reach Fort MacMurray. From that point on the Athabaska the Company would willingly carry goods and passengers down the river towards the north. Mgr. Taché determined to risk, when it might be necessary, even the Grand Rapids of the Athabaska. And in order to be near enough to that river at the right season it was necessary to have a storehouse for supplies much farther north-west than St Boniface. He fixed upon Lake La Biche (55° latitude, 113° longitude), in the modern Alberta. It could be reached from St Boniface through the prairies in two months, and by the little River La Biche it joins the Athabaska. Mgr. Taché's plan dated from 1855, when he was the only Bishop in the whole North-West. In 1856 he was on the spot himself, and Fathers Tissot and Maisonneuve were laying the foundations of the La Biche mission (Notre Dame des Victoires). The Bishop took a birch-bark canoe through the La Biche River into the Athabaska to try the mysterious rapids of which so much was said. He afterwards wrote: "This part of the mighty river had such a reputation that it was taken for granted that no boat could live through such falls. The Bishop of St Boniface, meaning to visit the other missionaries at Lake Athabaska, discovered that the danger of those 'Great Rapids' had been exaggerated. After seven days and two nights of voyaging from Lake La Biche, at 2 a.m. on July 2, 1856 ('a very good day for a visitation,' said Mgr. Taché), he gave the *Benedicamus Domino* at Lake Athabaska to Fathers Grollier and Grandin and Brother Alexis, who began to cry for joy at seeing their Bishop so soon, and after so great a venture."

Of course, Bishop Taché wrote as a soldier, who makes light of all danger, and desires to give courage to every new recruit.

Historical accuracy compels us to say that those particular rapids were not tried again by Palefaces until 1867. In that year Bishop Faraud, conducting the first Grey Nuns to the Far North, found himself compelled to take that same route. The nuns themselves kept a record of their experiences in that passage. It was published for the first time fifty years later, when it was read by many—not without emotion, as we know—in the volume *The Grey Nuns in the Far North* (McClelland and Stewart, Toronto), ch. v, p. 106.

Mgr. Faraud installed the Grey Nuns at Fort Providence, Great Slave Lake. Then, on the morrow of Christmas Day, 1869, he fastened on his snow-shoes and set out for the south. He reached La Biche in February, 1870, just in time to send forward the supplies which had arrived from Mgr. Taché, then at St Boniface. For twenty years of his laborious life Mgr. Faraud lived principally at that central mission of Lake La Biche. Cares, and correspondence, and climate, and pains wore him out prematurely. It was he who, with Father Taché, had prevailed upon Bishop de Mazenod to withdraw his order recalling them from those North-West missions where the Founder considered they were dying of starvation. By this good Bishop, the first Vicar Apostolic of Athabaska-Mackenzie, were well and truly laid the foundations on which the missions of the two Vicariates securely rest to-day. The Bishop had many assistants, his rivals in zeal and in toil of every kind. The names of some have already appeared here and there in our pages. Let us name also Fathers Leduc, Rémas, Végreville, and Collignon, and the only survivors, Bishop Grouard, V.A., and Father Henri Grandin, Provincial.

The first supply of necessities sent North by the water route from La Biche to Fort MacMurray was much larger than it had been possible to send by the La Loche portage. The Bishop freighted a barge for the mission purposes alone. Somewhat later two barges were employed, setting out every May with seventeen oarsmen. The increase of supplies made possible the increase of mission-stations. In these expeditions through the rapids of the Athabaska and farther north there were of course disappointments, delays, accidents, and serious losses. Sometimes a barge foundered or was dashed against a rock. Sometimes the cargo was lost in whole or in part. Sometimes the missionary voyagers were abandoned by their guides in dangerous times or places. Some of them were seriously hurt. Some of them felt the pangs of hunger

for very long. Once Mgr. Faraud nearly died of starvation on such a journey. Nevertheless, in fifty years not one of the missionaries has lost his life in those terrible rapids where many a trader, tourist, or explorer has come to grief. It seems as if the blessing of the courageous pioneer missionary Bishop, Alexander Taché, were hanging over the ill-omened Athabaska Falls to make them safe for his successors in the work of bringing the good tidings of the Gospel to the very poorest, the disinherited ones of the earth.

But Bishop Faraud entertained, and did not quickly give up, the hope of making a land route from La Biche to Mac-Murray. As long ago as 1870 he was blazing a trail through the primeval forest and making a cart-road, which would have allowed the voyagers to reach the Athabaska to the north of Grand Rapid. Nearly 100 miles of road had been cleared before the many difficulties encountered compelled the abandonment of the project. Bishop Faraud next turned his attention to the waterway, the La Biche River. It has its own rapids, though not very dangerous, and it hinders the traveller unexpectedly both by floods and by shallows. To be independent of this route, the young and able-bodied Father Collignon and some hired men made a sort of road for about fifty miles through the forest. It was used from 1878 to 1889. The first to travel by it was the present Bishop Grouard, who gives a lively description of what it was like. Tree stumps and whole trees that have been felled are not easily got over on such a new road. Drivers, oxen, and carts bump against them as we struggle forward. Next comes a muskeg or morass, where the first bullock leaves his mark, the second sinks to the knee, the third to the dewlap, and the fourth would sink to the horns if we did not lay down branches and brushwood to make it possible to push the cart on. Many a cart was overturned or smashed on such a "road," but many a time also, adds Bishop Grouard, we at length reached the Athabaska, and that was what mattered, for then the needed supplies could be sent forward.

It was said above that travellers could come from the Red River to Lake La Biche through the prairie. This is not quite literally true for the entire journey. To the south of the lake there were about 100 miles of wooded country to be crossed. Father Maisonneuve in his time did much to clear that ground for a road 150 miles southward as far as Fort Pitt, on the North Saskatchewan, on the prairie route from the Red River. Who says Saskatchewan says prairie. It is the great river of the prairie provinces. The North

Saskatchewan rises in the Rocky Mountains not far from the source of the Athabaska. The South Saskatchewan also has its fountain-head in the Rockies, but very far to the south of Mount Brown. The two rivers with many windings pursue a steady course to the east. They meet in the modern province of Saskatchewan, to the east of Prince Albert, now a city served by two railways. The Saskatchewan River gathers into its own bosom all the rivers of the immense prairies, carries them to Lake Winnipeg, whence they reach the Nelson River, and are poured into Hudson Bay. In former times the prairie route between east and west was only the Saskatchewan, with all its windings, which had to be followed every year by the barges of the Hudson Bay Company. The first white man who ventured over the prairies by a land route was Father Lacombe. In 1860 he started from Lake St Anne (about forty miles west of Edmonton in Alberta), setting his face towards St Boniface on the Red River. (The figure forty here, as some figures on other pages, may stand for a rough calculation only.) Others might have feared the roving bands of Crees, Assiniboines, or Sauteux, but the "Man of the Good Heart" knew that he could trust his Indians. Over the route that he then found and blazed, many Red River carts for thirty years carried not only his missionary brethren, but many traders and explorers. It is remarkable that modern histories of Canadian adventures and colonization make no mention of this Lacombe route by any such name. It may be that the authors wrote in ignorance. Many things, however, remain unknown precisely because people prefer not to know.

The prairie route was comparatively good in good weather. In rainy seasons it was extremely trying, and the journey from St Boniface to Lake La Biche could not be done in two months. "It took us seventy-five days," wrote Mgr. Clut in 1880. "Animals and carts sank so deeply that we were almost continually walking in icy water and mud to help them along. Midway in our journey we were attacked by clouds of mosquitoes and other stinging insects. Very soon our faces, necks, and hands were swollen and inflamed. If I had not brought some mosquito veils, our new missionaries would never have been able to go forward. But in spite of all their difficulties from earth and sky, and the living clouds between, their good spirits never failed by day or by night." Some of them, indeed, were ready to wager that the slow-moving, steady, and stolid oxen were the lineal descendants of those which once upon a time *au pas tranquille*



FATHER LACOMBE (AS FIRST SEEN BY
SIR WM. VAN HORNE)

To face p. 60

et lent, carried the *roi fainéant* in solemn state through the streets of Lutetia Parisiorum.

Oxen at first were the only beasts of burden on that prairie track. Horses were afterwards introduced. What was gained in speed was lost again when the shafts were broken as the horses sank in the mire, and when days had to be spent in looking for animals which had said "Ha, ha!" as they heard the call of the wild. Old-timers are eloquent when they tell us now of the lumbering, creaking, springless Red River carts of the brave days of old. They were all of wood, even the axles, and for two good reasons. They might need to be repaired with the first handy pieces of wood at any point on the plain, and they had to be changed from carts into boats at every ferry. Patience and good humour were the essential virtues of the traveller in those days. There is not in the North-West at this moment the wearer of purple or black soutane, or grey habit, who has not in the last quarter of a century many a time gathered the mud on such garment up to the knee, and perhaps even to the neck. In 1883 Father Soullier, afterwards Superior General of the Oblates, was making a formal visitation of the missions in the North-West. Bishop Grandin of St Albert wrote to Europe concerning him: "Our poor Father Visitor has suffered much hardship in spite of all our precautions. Many a time he had to put his shoulder to the wheel with the rest. There was no other way of getting the cart out of the mud. He will tell you his experiences when you see him. It is evident that he has not so sure a hand for the guidance of horses or oxen as of men."

It was thus the pioneer apostles travelled to their posts for many long years, alternately jolted in their carts, and walking beside them, and helping them on, in sunshine and in storm, stopping three times a day for Angelus and meals in the open air, shooting something for the pot if they could, and smoking out the mosquitoes if they could, and sleeping in the prairie grass *à la belle étoile*. Perhaps there was some pastoral poetry in such adventures. We of the new generation might be inclined to think so when shut up in a railway carriage with one of the veteran missionaries, one of the old and great race. His look is fixed upon the prairie, through which we are rushing at a great pace. His thoughts are far away. Is he dreaming with regret of the old days of misery when all the world was young and free, and he was content to cover in a month the distance which is now one day's journey?

From 1882, whilst passenger carts continued to cross the

prairie, the Hudson Bay Company sent forward goods by steamboats on the Saskatchewan. The new arrangement was not at all helpful to the missionaries of Athabaska and Mackenzie, for the steamers were not very reliable, and they dumped their cargo almost anywhere, no matter how far from its destination.

We return once more to Bishop Faraud's central station at Lake La Biche. Traders, knowing of his success in reaching Fort MacMurray through the Athabaska rapids, began to follow his example. The Company, alarmed by those competitors, began also to abandon the old and slow route of the Methy or La Loche portage. They obtained the services of the guides, and labourers, and barges of the mission. In 1887, as a great and bold stroke, they sent northwards on the mission barge the various portions of a steamboat. At the same time they made a road from Edmonton (the Fort of the Prairies, the most northerly prairie fort of the Company) to Athabaska Landing, 100 miles farther north, and at the most southerly elbow of the Athabaska River. From that date the roads from La Biche to Fort Pitt and to the Athabaska River were no longer used. The railway at this time was drawing nearer every day to Edmonton.

About the same date the Company offered to begin once more to carry the mission supplies into the North, charging a dollar for each package carried from one fort to another. Bishop Faraud accepted the offer as being less onerous than his own system, with which he had been obliged to be content. In 1889 the Bishop sent forward from La Biche his last two barges to the northern missions. The same year he retired to St Boniface, where in 1890 he closed his laborious and truly apostolic and fruitful career.

His successor (still happily with his northern flock), Bishop Grouard, was grieved to be told by the Company that the charge agreed upon would have to be raised to two dollars. He declared that he could not possibly face such a ruinous demand. Fathers Husson and Collignon built a great shed for him at Athabaska Landing in 1891, whilst he himself, immediately after his consecration at St Boniface, went on a begging tour through Canada, the United States, and Europe. On his return in 1892 he set up a steam sawmill at Lake Athabaska (extreme north of Alberta), and there he made ready the materials of a little steamer which he called the *St Joseph*. This steamer served the missions on Lake Athabaska and on the Peace River as far as the falls at Fort Vermilion, and on the Athabaska River from MacMurray

in the south to Fort Smith in the north. But to steam farther north was made impossible by the roaring rapids of Fort Smith. A second steamer, therefore, was required for the 1,500 miles of water between Fort Smith and the Arctic. Bishop Grouard again took up his begging wallet. The great Society of the Propagation of the Faith was very generous. The Redemptorist Fathers advanced a considerable sum. Bishop Grouard got a second little steamboat, which, under the name and protection of *St Alphonsus*, made its first trip in 1915 from Fort Smith to the mouths of the Mackenzie.

Since the division of the immense Vicariate of the North Bishop Grouard continues to preside over the continual daily work and the new ventures in Athabaska, whilst Bishop Breynat finds scope for all his intelligent zeal and resource in Mackenzie. New missionary posts have been established, new convents of nuns founded. Bishop Grouard's third steamer, the *St Charles*, was the first ever seen on the Peace River. Bishop Breynat's boat, the *St Mary*, is the best steamer that has yet appeared in the Far North, where it goes up and down on the Slave River, Great Slave Lake, and the Mackenzie.

In the south, in the middle of the Alberta province, the rapids of the Athabaska have still to be faced every summer while the daylight lasts. The mission barges leave Athabaska Landing, carrying the supplies for which the little steamers are waiting at Fort MacMurray and Fort Smith. The latest fashion in such barges is the scow, a long, broad, flat-bottomed boat guided down-stream by oars of enormous length and strength. At first there were two scows, then three, then four. In 1915 twelve scows together went down the rapids on their way from Athabaska Landing to MacMurray.

By comparison, the circumstances even of the Far North are civilized in our days. But how many hardships, disappointments, losses there were thirty, sixty, or seventy years ago! The packages, boxes, or bales destined for any of the missions were often lost, broken, or torn up on their long voyage. Sometimes the boatmen decided that what belonged to the Catholic Missions was common property—at least, when it could be eaten.

And what tedious delays there were! At the present day Canada itself can supply East and West and North; and the necessaries of life, for food and clothing and shelter, are brought by rail into the heart of what was the Great Lone Land and the wild western prairie. But in the times of which

we have been speaking, the times of La Loche portage and La Biche mission, it was easier and cheaper to get goods from England. And quite usually years had to elapse, perhaps three years, between the date of a letter telling someone in England what was needed and the arrival of the long-looked-for parcel. Suppose we are in 1870. The missionary at Fort Simpson or Fort Norman, on the Mackenzie, writes by the one and only winter post to tell his needs to Bishop Faraud at La Biche, who receives the letter in the spring of 1871. He approves, and communicates with Bishop Taché at St Boniface, where the letter arrives in the autumn. Mgr. Taché writes to England, perhaps to Father Pinet in Leeds, and the articles required reach St Boniface in the spring of 1872. They are then loaded in Red River carts, which take them across the prairie to Fort Pitt, but of course too late to be sent North the same year. Bishop Faraud, when he gets a message, brings the goods by the long and rough road from Fort Pitt to La Biche. Both these places are now easily found on the map, but the Oblate road between is probably once more part of prairie or forest primeval. Fort Pitt is on the North Saskatchewan, to the north of the very modern Lloydminster, which is on the Canadian Northern Railway near the frontiers of Alberta and Saskatchewan. At a great distance to the north-west, in almost the same latitude as Athabaska Landing, are the Lake and River La Biche and the Catholic Mission. At this place Bishop Faraud, bringing home the effects for the Mackenzie Missions in the autumn of 1872, keeps them safely during the winter and sends them to the North when the ice melts on the Athabaska in 1873. If all goes well, they will be landed on the banks of the Mackenzie in the summer or autumn. "If all goes well," but how many unforeseen delays there have been! A missing letter, an accident by flood or field, a misunderstanding, has often added a fourth year, or even a fifth, to the inevitable triennium. Some considerable bales of goods, especially registered, were missing for as many as six years, having been left behind at some stopping-place on the prairie, or thrown ashore at some little-known landing in the wild wood. Fortunate were the missionaries if their belongings were recovered at last instead of being disposed of as *bona derelicta*. Bishop Faraud wrote in 1877: "This year, for the first time, all the wares intended for the various missions are here in good order." He meant at Lake La Biche, which was only a half-way house.

When the articles for which the missionaries so often

waited were needed for the altar, or were workmen's tools for Fathers, Brothers, or Indians, how often must hope deferred have made the heart sick ! The late Father Ducot (forty years among the Indians) told us the following true tale about the disappointed hopes of Father Séguin: After the death of Father Grollier, Father Séguin remained, usually alone with Brother Kearney, at Fort Good Hope, near the Arctic Circle. After forty-one years among his Hareskin Indians, he became almost blind in the snows and in the ill-lighted hut of the long winter. Whatever of daylight there was for him came in through parchment. His lamp for the darkness was fed by fish-oil. Parchment means deerskin, not very cleverly treated, and not very far from being opaque; but for seventeen years the little church and hut of our Lady of Good Hope knew no other transparency. After the first five years Father Séguin begged for some panes of glass. He waited for three years, and nothing came. Either his letter had gone astray or the glass. He wrote again. He waited for three years more. This time there was no mistake. The chest or crate arrived in perfect order, most carefully nailed down. Father Séguin opened it joyfully and found the glass—in smithereens. There was not even one piece as large as his hand. The pious and gentle Father Séguin had not the heart to make another application. Other things were more needed in his mission, and, besides, where was a Bishop, where was “The Propagation of the Faith,” to find money ? Fortunately Mgr. Clut, the auxiliary Bishop, passed through Good Hope on his way to Fort Yukon in Alaska. He sympathized with Father Séguin, and promised to bring him on his return what glass he required, for he knew that M. Mercier, a French Canadian in charge of Fort Yukon, would give him the glass. M. Mercier did not disappoint the Bishop. In the following spring Bishop Clut arrived again at Good Hope. He explained to Father Séguin that the glass had been brought safely on for a great distance through the Rockies, but that one morning, in the hurry of re-embarking, it had been left behind, and that it was not missed until the afternoon, when the boat had already shot several rapids and it was impossible to go back. To make up for this *contretemps* Mgr. Clut wrote as quickly as possible a pressing appeal to the mission at La Biche. By so doing he saved a year of time. Two years later the youthful Father Ducot passed through La Biche on his way to Good Hope. Mgr. Faraud gave him the case for Father Séguin, and charged him strictly not to lose sight of it for an instant, and always to carry it

himself whenever it had to be carried to or from one of the boats.

In the night of September 14, 1875, the newly-ordained Father Ducot landed at Fort Good Hope with all his boat's company. The 300 Indians of the place, having heard the signalling shots from the approaching barge, began to fire off their own *feux de joie*, and to light their bonfires in honour of the "new little man of prayer." Father Ducot joyfully jumped ashore and made his way through an enthusiastic crowd to "the mission." Father Séguin was up, but too unwell to go out. He had not seen a priest for over a year, and he welcomed his young assistant with an embrace and with tears, but almost his first question was, "Have you brought the window-glass?" "Oh yes, Father, and I have taken the greatest possible care of it all along; Mgr. Faraud was most particular about it." "But where is it?" "Oh, it is all right; I have left it in the barge." "Oh, gracious goodness! What have you done? *C'est fini!* They'll throw it ashore, and it'll be smashed to pieces."

Father Ducot could not understand such concern and distress. The panes of glass which he had brought had cost only a few pence each. Experience teaches. Forty years later he wrote: "To understand such feelings you must have lived for long, as I have lived, in a house without real windows, in the cold of the North-West, and of the Mackenzie district in particular. In such a house you have little light and little protection from the wind; you feel the cold more; you have to burn more oil and more firewood; and you cannot help feeling the frost of the night. The sense of solitude, too, becomes more oppressive, and it is no easy task to study or to pray." Father Ducot, who, like so many others, went out joyfully to such a life amid the Arctic snows whilst the oil of unction was still fresh upon his priestly hands, might have added, what others have told us, that the missionary has sometimes returned from a journey to find that his "windows" have made a meal for the wolves and have let in the winter snow.

However, poor Father Séguin was not once more disappointed on that last occasion. His precious box or case was *not* thrown out and smashed, like a trunk at an English or Irish railway station. When the morning came, it was delivered to him intact, and it brought him great joy.

CHAPTER VII

THE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE

WE have said enough, or more than enough, of winter and summer in the Far North, of journeys over the ice, or the snow-fields, or the running waters, or the inland seas. It is time to tell more directly of the missionary work, the success or the failures, of the apostles of the West and North.

A question which the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda addresses to Bishops is: "What are the chief hindrances to the spread of the Gospel and religious progress?" To this question in 1880 Mgr. Grandin, Bishop of St Albert, then the nearest to civilization of the mission-fields in the Canadian North-West, replied: "One great hindrance is our poverty—an obstacle which we can never surmount. Works which we long to begin are impossible; existing works languish for want of means. Another difficulty which hampers us is the frequent breakdown in health of our missionaries. The climate is not unhealthy, but the physical hardships are so great and so constant, the long and exhausting journeys, the insufficient and insipid or sickening food, and the heavy manual labours are such that a priest who has been ten years on the mission would need to retire as an invalid at the very time when he ought to be most efficient by reason of his costly experience."

Missionaries, writing to their Superiors in Europe, are accustomed to tell of conversions to the Faith and of the piety of their flocks rather than of their own difficulties. Nevertheless, we have been able to find a few letters which give us some idea of the price paid by the missionaries in their victorious battles for the Faith. Bishop Clut, from the Nativity Mission (founded in 1848) at Fort Chipewyan, on Lake Athabaska, the most southerly of the Athabaska-Mackenzie missions, wrote on March 11, 1874: "The letters from Lake La Biche and Europe have come at last. They were expected about February 20. Elsewhere you all talk of progress. Here, in our bleak North, we have a different tale. On the whole our letters have brought good news. Only one thing upsets me. I find that our missions can have

no provisions for at least a year, and that we shall not receive even one sack of flour to divide amongst them all. Last year very little reached us of any kind of provisions, and not an ounce of flour. This year we shall be even worse off than before. It is only now that we are receiving what we sent for during the Franco-Prussian War. As our funds were very low, we ordered only half the usual quantity of provisions. This year we ordered nothing, so that the little that was due to arrive in 1873 must do for four years. I do not know if we shall have flour enough for the altar breads. I am distressed by our destitution on account of the Fathers and Brothers and Sisters of Charity. It is very hard for a Father in God not to be able to give even a bit of bread to those who are accustomed to look to him in all their wants."

In the following year (1875) Mgr. Clut was at Providence Mission, Great Slave Lake. His correspondence—the winter post—reached him there. It was brought to him by Brother Boisramé from Lake Athabaska. The Brother had been sent by the Bishop for provisions. He brought back nothing except the letters, reaching Fort Providence extremely fatigued after a march of forty days on snow-shoes. Mgr. Clut wrote on February 21, 1875: "Bad news from Lake Athabaska. Shortage of supplies; almost famine. It may be that the Company's barges will not be sent North if there is not food enough for the boatmen. What, then, will become of us, and of the nuns, and their orphans here and at Lake Athabaska? The Fathers and Brothers are in wretched health even as it is. Let us hope that Divine Providence will in some way or other come to our relief. For seven years now we have been living in uncertainty and anxiety. Shall we be able to hold out for another year? God alone knows, as he alone knows to what extremities we have been reduced already."

Let forty-four years more of mission life in the North pass as best they may. We are in 1918, and on July 9 we read in Canadian Catholic papers an appeal from the Right Rev. Bishop Breynat, which says: "Returning from Rome to my Mackenzie Mission, I am met by the news of a terrible disaster. A great flood has swept away or spoiled all the year's supplies collected at MacMurray, on the Athabaska, to be forwarded to our various missions in the North. This is even a greater misfortune for us than the similar accident three years ago at Vermilion Falls on the Peace River. To make matters worse, our fishing season, owing to weather conditions, was a failure. Even last year the missionaries and nuns suffered much. But they never complained.

They simply told me that they were doing the best they could. I do not know what they will do next winter. No fewer than 300 persons are depending upon me for food, clothing, and shelter."

A few days later another letter from Mgr. Breynat gave evidence of the wonderful generosity of Canadian Catholics. "The alms already received surpass my expectations, and fill my heart with gratitude. If my appeal continues to be well received, the gifts will make good the £3,000 or more that we have lost, and will enable me to provide before winter some of the necessities for our Far Northern missions."

The missionaries of the North-West have always been able to say with St Paul, "I know how to be brought low and to be hungry." Their great anxiety always has been for the upkeep of the missions, on account of their continuous influence in the saving of souls, that great work of which the Apostle of the Gentiles himself proclaims that it has also the promise and the power to bless and make happy even the world which now is.

To explain the cost of the upkeep of the missions it is hardly necessary to mention that the carriage of goods was, and is, the chief item of expense. Even in the modern days, when a bag of flour might be bought for twenty shillings at Winnipeg, it was sold for £4 at Good Hope.

Readers will ask where the missionary Bishop and priests in the North find such sums of money as are needed for the support of 300 people, young and old. They can make no money from the soil. There are, indeed, mineral treasures in that frozen ground, but it will take much time and skill and capital to turn them into wealth. Again, the Indian does not yet (except in British Columbia) "contribute to the support of his pastor"—for obvious reasons. He is proverbially "the poor Indian." To be hungry is his normal state. When he is not hungry it is because, with the price of furs, or with a freshly-killed caribou, he has made a great feast for himself and his tribesmen without bestowing a single thought upon the morrow. Moreover, like all have-nots coming into contact with those who seem to have, he is—quite naturally and blamelessly—a beggar. When Father Taché (afterwards Archbishop of St Boniface) first went into the North-West, an Indian one day asked him for a shirt. The missionary was not well off himself. "But," said the Indian, feeling his collar, "I see you are wearing one; you can give me that, as you must have another for a change." Whenever an Indian does any work about a mission-station he expects to be supported, with his wife and family, and to

be paid. Although it is only natural that the poor Indians should expect to receive something from all the Palefaces who come amongst them, it must be added that two causes have made heavier the burdens which they and their children impose upon the Catholic Mission funds. In the first place, the Fur Company gives credit (supplying flour, or tea, or powder and shot) to the Indians before they are able to bring in more furs. In due course the hunter or trapper is told that the claims entered against him in the big book have all been wiped out. He comes rejoicing from the fort to the mission to suggest that the priest, who cares nothing for the things of this world, should imitate the fur trader, and make a present to the Indian of anything lent to him in the day of his distress. And the Indian language is very eloquent in terms of denunciation of anyone who cares for money, or who tries to think even of to-morrow, to say nothing of next season. In the next place, Protestant missionaries to the Indians are numerous and active, and well supplied with funds. The Indians are invited to conclude that the English and rich religion, able to give much, is the right religion, and that the French and Roman religion, if it cannot give, cannot be right. Under these circumstances it is marvellous that Indians professing what is called Protestantism are not twice as numerous as they now are. And it is not at all surprising that the priests have hardly yet been able to begin to teach their converts the duty (when within their power) of coming to the assistance of those "who serve the altar." In connection with this subject it must not be forgotten that for long years no one in the North-West had the least right to give away even one pelt of a fox. To do so would have been a serious breach of law and order, quite contrary to the Company's charter—a very important document.

Let no one, however, suppose that the Red Man does not know how to be generous. He *is* generous in his own camp, in his wigwam. There the missionary is sure of a welcome. He gives away the remaining provisions which he brings, but he knows that his host in turn will share with him the last morsel of fish or meat. The Indian in his own poor camp or cabin is generous and respectful to his Black-robe. Only when he comes among the irreligious whites is he sometimes unreasonable or insolent.

We shall see in a moment how the Catholic missions manage to subsist amid such poverty-stricken folk, and in such a barren land. Let us first consider another question which the missionary Bishop, Mgr. Grandin, answered to the Holy

See in 1880. "What are the commonest diseases?" The Bishop answered: "The commonest, and assuredly the most dangerous, is hunger. As persecution in the Church at large, so in my diocese want of food is always with us, if not at one particular point, surely at another. I believe that there is not one of our Indian children of as much as seven years of age who has not sometimes been without food for several days together. Some of the Indians eat wretched and unwholesome roots and plants, or even the skins of which their clothing and tents are made. Pagan Indians have been known to eat their wife and children. Nor is it only the native who is hungry. The missionary, too, especially on his journeys, which are necessarily of great length, often suffers the pangs of hunger, or is even at death's door, before he can find anything to eat. Last winter, in the south-west of this diocese, two of the Oblate Fathers, to save their lives, had to eat things which it would have been thought impossible for a human being to put into his mouth, including not only dog, but also a wolf killed (as is usual) with a poisoned arrow."

So it is that Famine reigns supreme over those cold regions, and has marked them for her own. Only the spectral hand of Famine could wield the pen giving a faithful picture of life—or lingering death—in the North. It is under her orders that the tribes are for ever on the march, in season and out of season, from south to north, or from north to south, from east to west, or from west to east across the steppes and through the forests. Famine decimates those tribes even on the march whilst they seek to escape. When, at the melting of the ice, the traveller comes upon a camping-place where bones still lie, though the wolves have passed, he recognizes the sign and seal of famine. If the traveller, with his Indian guides, comes upon some remains of a white man—trader, explorer, or paid servant—concerning whom the rest of his party had reported that they lost him in a snow-storm, the Indians may see marks and tokens which make them whisper that he was the weakest, and that the others, constrained by famine, saved their own lives by taking his.

"To fast" keeps always its rigorous meaning in the North-West. Many a time the Blackrobe, explaining "fasting Communion," has been interrupted by the question: "How could I break my fast? I have had nothing to eat for two (or more) days."

Many a time, when the last hunter has come back to the camp having "seen nothing," a caravan of wretched crea-

tures will set out for the nearest fort or mission. The wolves follow them by instinct, and they are not disappointed of prey. The survivors, with burning fever within and "burning" icy cold without, reach the dwelling of the Pale-faces unable to speak—except by their haggard faces, which recall the words of the Book of Job: "My flesh is consumed; my bone hath cleaved to my skin, and nothing but lips are left about my teeth."

In the land of such a struggle for life, and of survival, not perhaps of the fittest or fit, how have the Catholic missions been able to live and to Christianize and civilize great numbers? In the Farthest North there are fifty missionaries, as many nuns in hospitals or schools, and some hundreds of aged and infirm persons and helpless orphans. It is to the charitable at a great distance that they all stretch out their hands, whilst they lift their eyes to the Father of Heaven in prayer. For three-quarters of a century the principal stay, the staff of support, of those northern missions, as of so many others, has been the great Catholic Society of the Propagation of the Faith, founded in France, and still supported in great measure by the faith and charity of French Catholics. Archbishop Taché wrote, as he drew near the close of his career: "To understand our position, it must be remembered that nearly all our missions were begun in the inaccessible and wild woods, and amongst wretchedly poor, rude, and pagan people. Our only resources for many long years were the allowances made by the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, and afterwards by the Society of the Holy Childhood."

The missions of the American North-West, and in particular of the Far North, would never have existed but for the "Propagation of the Faith," and the priests who came with advancing civilization would have found all the Indians fast bound in some sort of Protestantism, or more deeply sunk in paganism and immorality than they were before the coming of the white men.

The Society of the Holy Childhood (as recorded by Mgr. Taché) is also a great benefactor of the northern missions. To this Society many Indian orphans owe the preservation of their life, their education, and their religious instruction.

L'Œuvre Apostolique also has great claims upon our gratitude. In 1873-74 it saved from famine the whole Athabaska-Mackenzie Vicariate. Its charitable work is continued to this hour.

Needless to say, help came too from individual Catholics, especially in Eastern Canada and in France. Some charit-



A WIGWAM

able souls were moved by what they read in annals of one kind or another. More numerous still were those to whom the Vicars Apostolic made personal appeals by spoken addresses or by letters. These resources, which we have named—of necessity somewhat uncertain and variable—were the only support of the Northern missions until 1899.

In 1899-1900 the Canadian Government made treaties with the Indian tribes of Athabaska and Mackenzie. The Indians gave up their right to rove everywhere all over the country, which indeed belonged to them as their immemorial hunting-ground. The Government undertook (besides other payments) the provision of industrial schools, and a fixed payment for a certain number of pupils. Since then progress has been rapid. Schools, orphanages, and hospitals have been multiplied in the charge of Canadian nuns. The Mackenzie Vicariate is blessed with six institutions of the kind under the care of the Grey Nuns (Sisters of Charity, founded in 1737), the Athabaska Vicariate with eight under the Sisters of Providence (founded in 1843).

But with new help received, with new undertakings made possible, there necessarily came also new obligations, new burdens. The missionary spirit could not be content with good work already done, when much more work still needed to be done. The Right Rev. Bishop Grouard in 1905, thus explained his position in Athabaska: "There are 312 children in our schools. The Government pays for 100, and pays us here only at the same rate as the schools far to the south of us or in Manitoba. Still, we are grateful for the Government grant, without which the three newest convents could never have been founded. But, of course, the Propagation of the Faith, the Holy Childhood, and our own labours are needed for the continued existence of our institutions."

"Our own labours," *le travail de tous*, there indeed is the treasure-house, the mine of wealth by which our Catholic missions prosper—the labour of Bishops, and priests, and nuns, and, above all, the lay Brothers. How economical they all are! The nuns have made their grey habits out of the wrappings of bales of goods. The priests have cut up deer-skins to make clothes for themselves. In their huts one cannot find even the furniture of a European cottage. In the long winter evenings one lamp alone gives light to a little community when they eat, or sew, or read, or pray. Of their actual manual work Bishop Grouard gave this report to the General Chapter of his Order in 1898—that is, thirty-six years after the erection of his Vicariate:

“There is hard work for all. The Fathers, in order to give religious instruction, must study the Indian languages, write, and print, and bind the needed little manuals. They have to hear confessions, to attend sick calls (sometimes at a great distance) in winter and in summer, and to teach school when possible. But they are also obliged to provide food and shelter for themselves by their manual labour. They help the Brothers in fishing, building, wood-cutting, and so forth, and in cultivating the soil whenever that is possible. In such manual labours it is not comforts that are sought, but the bare necessities of life. We are not, indeed, able to eat *bread* in the sweat of our brow, but we certainly have to sweat to provide ourselves with a potato from the rude soil, or a fish from the lake, or a feathered or furry animal from the wood. If it is hard for even one Father or Brother to provide for himself, how greater far is the difficulty in the case of schools and orphanages ! Without a large staff of workers, especially of lay Brothers, the continued existence of such establishments would be utterly impossible.”

Of those devoted religious men—the lay Brothers—we shall say more, please God, in another volume. Well do they deserve the confidence of their Bishops and the missionary priests. The constant labour which is needed—and which the external resources already mentioned make it possible to attempt—cannot be entrusted to native paid servants unless under supervision. The priest cannot possibly give all the time to such supervision, or to doing all things with his own hands. The invaluable services of the lay Brother set him comparatively free for his essential priestly duties. The Brother, a true Religious, with a true high vocation of his own, renders to the servants of God services beyond all earthly price. With his intelligent devotedness, his skill, his strong arm, and after a time his invaluable experience, he does a great deal of truly missionary work, hidden indeed from the eyes of men—like that of his priestly brothers in religion—but lustrous in the eyes of God.

Very varied are the Brother's duties in house, and church, and sacristy, and school, or in the woods, or perhaps in a garden, or perhaps in byre or stable. But his chief work in the Far North is fishing. In the North people live upon fish, and if it were always plentiful they would fare well. The rivers and lakes are usually full of fish of great variety and of delicious flavour, and so plump that no other relish is needed when they are stewed in their own juice. In those Arctic waters are found pike, carp, trout, white salmon,

herring, white fish, and blue fish. They move in great shoals or schools in their seasons from the lakes to the rivers, and from the rivers to the sea. Of course, they have their favourite homes or haunts. These the fisherman has to find out, and, if he finds them, then to catch the fish in great quantities, and just at the moment when they can be frozen and easily preserved. The fishing season is necessarily short, hence immense quantities are stored up whenever it is possible. Suppose there is a school or an aged home attached to a mission. There may be 100 or 150 human beings to provide for. Also a certain number of dogs, the beasts of burden in the Far North. To supply so many mouths, many of them far from "inutiles," during a long winter, no less than 25,000 fair-sized fishes are required. The dogs are fed once a day, and take their portion raw. The human beings cook their own portion which is given them "three times a day, twenty-one times a week, for a novelty."

Autumn is the fishing season. Though short, it requires long preparation, and sometimes dangerous journeys. It is seldom that there is a good fishing-ground near the forts or missions. From Providence Mission on Great Slave Lake the fisherman has to travel 40 miles; from Fort Simpson (on the Mackenzie River) 150 miles. And going and coming he has to cross stormy lakes and to negotiate rapids.

Fishing in the North is almost a gamble. Its success depends on many things. The fishy crowds may not move just when expected; the wind may delay the boats; the waves may break the nets; the ice may crush the boats when laden, or may hinder their return to the mission; an unwelcome breath of warm air may prevent the successful saving of the cargo. But if absolutely everything goes well, the good Brothers, or the others, who, in imitation of St Peter, have said, "I go a-fishing," have reason to thank God and take courage because at the mission, in the convent, the orphanage, and the hospital there will be no starvation in the long winter just about to begin. If, on the other hand, something has gone wrong, then there will be rationing, perhaps eating of stuff which dogs in Europe would not touch, and, in addition, fishing under the ice, with much hardship and little success, during the winter months.

Here is a portion of a letter to a benefactor written by Father Lecorre from Fort Providence after the autumn fishing season of 1898: "At Bordeaux it is easy to procure a morsel of bread which may serve one for a meal. From here I should have to travel hundreds of miles to find it. . . .

Usually the ice does not come to stop our fishing until the end of October. This year it came a month earlier. A most violent north wind, with blinding snow, froze the waters, then broke the ice in pieces, and tore and carried off nearly all our nets. At that moment we had not succeeded in taking even one-third of the quantity we needed. And our nets were in great part gone! We tried to hope for a while that this early frost would not continue, and that an Indian summer (as we say here) might enable us to spread once more what nets remain to us. It was not to be. The winter had really begun. Both snow and ice came every day in greater quantities. It will only remain for us to try fishing under the ice during many long months. What a hard task that will be! The place where there may be some chance of success is two days' journey from here. Two of our devoted Brothers will be for four or five months far away from us, spending the day on an immense frozen lake in a blizzard, breaking the ice to a depth of four, five, or six feet, watching for a bite, pulling up one poor fish when so fortunate, and seeking shelter at night in a tent on an island where wood to make a fire is very scarce. Next day the ice must be broken again in the very same places, and the Brothers, with their feet in the snow all day, and their bare hands in ice and water, have to suffer intensely. And then whatever they catch has to be brought home, the two Brothers walking on snow-shoes, the two sleds drawn by dogs, certainly deserving of the feed of fish which they ought to get every evening of their two days' journey homewards. But alas! sometimes the fishing under the ice is a complete or all but complete failure. What is the poor Superior of a mission-station to do then? You will easily understand his anxiety. But we rely upon Divine Providence, which indeed has never failed to hear the prayers put up to him in this place, the prayers especially of the little children cared for by the nuns."

The prayers of the children, and of the Sisters of Charity, and of the missionary priest are indeed the supreme resource in the struggle for life amid the Polar snow and ice. Prayers are addressed in particular to St Joseph, the provider of the Holy Family, and (according to Mgr. Breynat) the chief procurator or bursar of the Mackenzie Vicariate. Not merely once or twice has a Mass of thanksgiving, with St Joseph specially in view, been said or sung in the Mackenzie Vicariate. And more than one interposition of Divine Providence has made witnesses quite willing to proclaim a miracle granted through the intercession of St Joseph. In truth,



FISHING UNDER THE ICE

it may well seem a standing miracle that in so many years of poverty, scarcity, hardship, and hunger no one attached to any of the missions, not even one of the Indian orphan children, has died of starvation.

In March, 1917, there was great distress in St Joseph's Orphanage, Fort Resolution, Great Slave Lake. The autumn fishing season had been a failure. In the winter the hunter had returned with empty hands. The caribou had not come to that neighbourhood for years. Besides, this was the season in which they would be going back to the Farthest North, the shores of the Arctic. Indian hunters, returning from the winter quarters of the caribou east of the lake, and 300 miles from Fort Resolution, had reported that the woods there were without a sign of life. And the winter fishing under the ice had been most unfortunate. In ten days Brothers Kérautret and Meyer had taken only four trout with seven hooks all at the same time let down in the depths over a great expanse of water. Going to examine his lines in the fog in forty degrees centigrade of frost, Brother Meyer in one spot went down, and was saved from a watery grave only because the long-handled tool which he was carrying to break the ice elsewhere rested on the solid ice on each side of him. After this litany of misfortunes hunger was felt at St Joseph's Mission. There were 100 Indian children, ten Sisters of Charity, and as many Oblates. Father Duport went to the children's refectory, where they were going to eat their small rationed portion of roast fish. He told them it was their fault that there was so little to eat; the Brothers and nuns had done their very best. The poor children began to whimper, as if accused of eating too much. But the Father Superior said what he meant: "You have not prayed fervently enough to St Joseph." They promised to begin a novena at once, and to pray with all their strength. The Reverend Mother, being questioned, declared that not one less than 100 caribou would be needed to continue to feed the scholars alone. In two days the last of the reserved and rationed provisions would have disappeared. Then and there the novena was begun. Father Duport desired two Indian hunters to get ready the sleds and start. They assured him there was not the least chance of finding anything. But he said: "Go. St Joseph owes us 100 caribou. Since they are needed, he will send them. Go and bring them to us." As they were to be paid, they set out. After a two days' journey (a short journey in the North), the two hunters were amazed to see

a greater number of caribou than they had ever seen together before moving forward to the lake's open surface and coming from the east, a quarter from which in Indian memory no reindeer had ever come before. The skilful hunters soon recovered from their surprise, took up good positions, and began to fire, sometimes bringing down two animals with one shot. When their task was over, they counted 103 caribou. At that moment the nuns and orphans in their chapel for the novena were (as it was reported) "with heart-rending petitions" beseeching St Joseph to send them every one of the 100 caribou which the establishment required. No wonder that Father Duport repeats with St Teresa that no one ever has recourse to St Joseph without being heard. The saint's interest in St Joseph's Orphanage and the Mackenzie Vicariate has been manifested on various occasions, other than the one of which we have told.



CLOSE OF A GOOD DAY

CHAPTER VIII

IN GOD'S OWN TIME

IT was in 1845, as we may reverently perceive, that the hour had struck for the conversion of the Déné race. Abbé John Baptist Thibault, a Canadian priest, under the directions of that venerated pioneer, Bishop Provencher, was God's agent in the earliest stage of this great work. Far away from the Red River, with its "bells of the Roman Mission," at the Methy or La Loche portage, in the north-west of what is now the province of Saskatchewan, the zealous and courageous Abbé Thibault held consultations lasting six weeks in the summer of 1845 with representatives of the Indian tribes of the North. He had been in the West in earlier years also, but in 1845 he met the numerous Déné tribesmen from the North, whose fur-trading business brought them to the La Loche rendezvous. He found these Indians not only willing, but eager, to hear the good word of the man of prayer. During the period of French trading, the Indians had gained some knowledge of the white men's religion, and some of themselves were *métis* or half-breeds.

The mention of Abbé Thibault calls for mention of others also, and of earlier dates than 1845. Abbé Thibault and about a dozen other Canadian priests (for some short or long period) were the first preachers of the Gospel in the Canadian West—i.e., such a territory as Europe. Jesuit Fathers had gone out to the West in the early colonizing days. Indeed, one of them was chaplain to Lavérendrye in the present Manitoba about 1730. Father Aulneau, S.J., was massacred by the Sioux at the Lake of the Woods (near the south-east corner of Manitoba) in 1736. But the failure of the project of a New France in the New World and the suppression in 1773 of their own Society brought the Jesuit Missions to the Western Indians to an end before they had well begun. There had been no priest in the Canadian Far West for sixty-seven years when Abbé Provencher went up to the Red River in 1818. In 1891, the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the Oblates in Canada, Archbishop Taché, O.M.I., preaching in Montreal,

said: "The Oblates have certainly worked hard in the countries which are now Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, but they have not been alone, and they were not the first. Members of the secular clergy have gone before us, carrying high and carrying very far into those inhospitable regions the sacred banner of salvation. Those noble pioneers have been our models, and I am happy to say they are with us still, our companions, our dear friends, and fellow-labourers."

The most conspicuous of those "noble pioneers," and the pioneer of them all, was a Canadian parish priest, Abbé Provencher, whom old Father Dandurand and the other old-timers used to describe as equally great in stature (over six feet), good looks, dignity, kindness, piety, energy, perseverance, and final success. His going to the Red River was due to the Scottish Protestant the Earl of Selkirk (Thomas Douglas, b. 1771, d. at Pau in the South of France, 1820; friend of Sir Walter Scott). Father Morice, in his *History*, tells us how Lord Selkirk, a large shareholder in the Hudson Bay Company, acquired rights over 110,000 square miles of land on the Red River and the Assiniboine. In the Red River Valley, near the meeting of the waters of these rivers—making a beginning in 1812—he formed a colony, which became known as the Red River Settlement, a part of vague Rupert's Land, or again of Assiniboia, when there was formed a Council of Assiniboia, as a sort of Home Rule Government under the powerful Company. The Red River was hardly known in England until 1870, when Garnet Wolseley was sent up there (to Fort Garry, where now is Winnipeg) with a sufficient military force to ensure that the newly-bought people should be under the Government at Ottawa. A little later Wolseley's comrade, afterwards General Sir William Butler, made the Red River and the Farther West very well known, through his books, *The Great Lone Land* and *The Wild North Land*. But the Red River Settlement had its own little history even half a century before 1870. The colonists were Highlanders (some the evicted tenants of Lord Sutherland) and Irishmen. And the local settlers were Canadians and half-breed Indians. Thus there were differences of race and religion. Besides, there was rivalry as between the employees of the two fur-trading companies (united only in 1821). Also, a further contribution to discontent and quarrelling, there was want, as a matter of course, in such a climate, and there was sickness. The winter of 1812-13 was "most miserable." Distress and mutual injury led

to fighting, and even to what is fairly enough called a battle. The prospects of the colony were poor, and some folk were going or gone from it. Lord Selkirk, sincerely desirous of the success of the settlement, asked for priests, not merely as appreciating the good effect in general of religious influence, but bearing in mind that even some of the Scots were Catholics, to say nothing of the Canadians and Irish, and others. As a matter of fact, the coming of the priests not only helped the cause of peace, but gave new courage to the colonists in the hardships with which they had to contend. Lord Selkirk asked for priests in 1816. He made a second application in 1817. The only Canadian Bishop of the time, Mgr. Plessis of Quebec, complied with his wishes as soon as he possibly could. So it was that in 1818 he sent the Abbés Provencher and Dumoulin. They landed on July 16, 1818, at the Red River Settlement, where now we have St Boniface on one bank and Winnipeg on the other. Before we pass away from Lord Selkirk and his projects, let us, as Father Morice says, "in simple justice" recall some words of the two missionaries who in 1818 were preparing in Montreal for their trip to the Red River. Lord and Lady Selkirk were then in Montreal. Abbé Provencher wrote: "The Countess of Selkirk has provided us with a beautiful chapel—i.e., everything required for Mass, including vestments—and she promises to do even more." Abbé Dumoulin wrote to Mgr. Plessis: "I have never met a lady so learned, charmingly witty, and obliging. She has gone to extremes in procuring for us all that we may need, and with such good grace that all her attentions are doubled in value. It seems that milord never does anything without consulting her." No doubt he consulted her before endowing the Catholic mission of the Red River with a seignory or manor of five by four miles along the river.

Abbé Provencher had gone as a Vicar General of the Bishop of Quebec into that upper country, or hinterland, or *pays d'en haut*, which was really another world. In 1820, he himself was made a Bishop for the North-West. His appointment meant that the rest of his days would have to be spent in what to ordinary men was hardship in exile. It is recorded of him that even when Bishop he led a poor and hard life. He cultivated his garden, in the plain sense of the word. He dug and planted his plot of ground, in order to have something to eat. He travelled from one part to another of his prairie diocese in a rude cart, drawn by a bullock before he had a horse. The seat in this cart was a chair, which the Bishop tied down securely with ropes.

His soutane, patched and threadbare, was certainly not purple, whatever doubts there may have been about its colour. He wore wooden shoes. And he practised poverty so much, simply because he would not spend upon himself what he needed for the Indian missions.

This apostolic man was always appealing to Quebec for priestly help. In 1838, when some settlers in Oregon were asking for priests, he was able to send forward Abbés Blanchet and Demers into British Columbia, for the Church, long before the State, was acting upon the now new Canadian motto, *A mari usque ad mare*. After a journey of four months and fourteen days from the Red River, these two missionaries reached the Pacific coast on November 24, 1838. Already, on October 10, they had said Mass on the highest point of the Rocky Mountains. Abbé Blanchet ten years later was Archbishop of Oregon City, and Abbé Demers, as his suffragan, was Bishop in Vancouver Island, with residence in the rising town of Victoria.

Another of those devoted missionary priests from Canada, whom Bishop Provencher brought to his assistance in the North-West, was the Abbé Thibault already named. He was only a subdeacon when he arrived at St Boniface in 1833. He was ordained priest in 1834, and nearly forty years of his priestly life were devoted to the Indian missions. He evangelized the Sauteux and Crees of the prairies, and in 1842 he pushed farther afield. After a two months' ride on horseback, he wrote to the Bishop, on June 19, 1842, from the Fort of the Prairies (now the city of Edmonton, capital of Alberta) that some of those to whom he had been preaching might perhaps scalp him one day. "He was in the hands of God." In July he was about fifty miles north-west of Edmonton, where, instead of the Cree name of Devil's Lake, he gave his little mission the name "Mission of Lake St Anne," the Patroness of Canada. The mission and name still survive. After a visit to the Rocky Mountains, he returned east, and in 1844 he was at Cold Lake, nearly 250 miles north-east of Lake St Anne. About the same time, he sent messages which increased the number of the Indians whom he met, as already mentioned, at the La Loche or Methy Portage in 1845. The priest was all the more anxious about these Indians because a very zealous Wesleyan minister, Rev. Mr. Evans, seemed likely to have a meeting with the "Chiefs and Braves" of Lake Athabaska and Ile à la Crosse, who, of course, were not Christians.

The great La Loche or Methy Portage was the terminus

for the north and for the south. The caravans from Montreal, from the Red River, and from Hudson Bay, came there with provisions and effects of various kinds, for the use of the Company's men in the north, and for barter with the Indians, and they took back to the east precious cargoes of furs. On the other hand, the barges which had brought the furs, or some of them, from the north, took back the annual supplies of food and other good things. From Good Hope, the southward journey up-stream to La Loche took two months, and each barge required a considerable number of men to row or pull it against the strong and rapid currents of the Mackenzie, Peace, Slave, Athabaska, and Clearwater Rivers. For a whole month, the portage was a perfect babel of tongues and tribes. There were men of several European nations. Of Indian tribes there were Crees, Sauteux, and Maskegons, all Algonquins, and arriving from the east and the south; there were Loucheux, Hare-skins, Slaves, Dog-ribs, Yellow-knives, Beavers, Montagnais, Caribou-eaters, all these being of the Déné nation, and coming from the north.

In the year of grace 1845, the northern visitors were more numerous than usual, for the message had reached them that the Blackrobe, the man of prayer, would be at the portage. So he was, and he was the earliest to keep that tryst. Leaving Lake St Anne after Easter, in a little canoe, with one companion (no doubt an Indian), he reached in the middle of May, after a fast of several days, Ile à la Crosse, about 500 miles to the north-west. This island, in the lake to which it gives its name, was itself so called from the game of lacrosse, played there by Indian teams. All the barges from the south or the east passed through Lacrosse Lake on their way to the portage, about sixty miles to the north. At Ile à la Crosse, Abbé Thibault remained for some weeks, instructing and baptizing the Indians, who were eager to hear the good word which would prepare them for the home of the Great Spirit on high; 1845, then, is the date of the foundation of the historic mission of Ile à la Crosse. The months of June and July of that year the zealous Abbé Thibault spent at the portage. While waiting for the arrival of the brigades from the north, he instructed the local tribes, the Montagnais, whom he found most docile, and full of reverence for the priest. When the "barges from the North Pole" at last arrived, he found that the northern tribes also were anxious to learn more and more of the Christian religion, of which they all had some knowledge, in a general way, through their intercourse with

the French Canadians in the employment of the Company. Some of those Canadians were indeed an evil influence among, for instance, the Sauteux (as Archbishop Taché had to record), but, speaking generally, those hardy and adventurous *coureurs des bois* had so much of the faith of their Norman, Breton, or Vendéan fathers, that they made a road for Christianity among the Indians with whom they associated. Round the camp fires, or in the wigwams, when the Red Men told their old tales, the French had stories and descriptions of their own. "They will one day come amongst you, the men of God, the men who teach to pray. You will know them by their black robes. And you won't mistake them. They have no wives. It is they who will teach you how to please the Great Spirit, and how to reach the truly happy hunting-grounds." So did those forerunners of the Catholic missionaries speak to the Indian hunters, and trappers, and trackmen, and oarsmen, with whom they worked, and with whom very often they made their homes. Hence it was that such an early missionary as Abbé Thibault found among the tribes some little knowledge of Christianity, and a great desire for fuller knowledge, and for the presence of a priest. Those tribes which soonest became true and sincere Catholic Christians were precisely those which had known the French voyagers and half-breeds for long before the Blackrobe appeared amongst them.

Mgr. Taché, writing in 1869, counted in the Canadian North-West twenty-two native tribes, and descendants of fourteen civilized nations. Of these last, the Catholic or French *métis* were the most numerous. They were then about 15,000, almost a new race of men, well made, tall, strong, agile, ready for any danger or fatigue, the acknowledged superiors of the Indians themselves in the chase of the buffalo, in marching, or running, or rowing, in shooting the rapids, or pulling against the stream. Mgr. Taché, who had long intimate acquaintance with such men, gives almost fabulous examples of their skill, for instance, in shooting whilst galloping over the prairie. He knew men to bring down a bird flying overhead, whilst their horse was in full gallop. Their instinct for finding their way through vast prairies or forests, their keenness of vision and power of endurance, were not surpassed by the like qualities in the hardiest and most successful of Indian chiefs.

The gradual colonization of the North-West has of necessity changed the position, as of the Indians, so also of the half-breeds. The Indians, except in the Farthest

North, are mostly in reserves; the half-breeds are scattered in the towns, "swelling the ranks of the unemployed." The efforts of Father Lacombe to form a special settlement, St Paul des Métis (in the east of Alberta), had no lasting success. But the *métis* cannot be forgotten by Catholic Canada. They were not only the precursors, but the auxiliaries and guides, of the priest. It was they who taught him the Indian languages. It was they who sometimes saved his life at the risk of their own.

Father Morice, in his *History*, gives a detailed account of the works of those Quebec priests who were the first missionaries of the Canadian North-West. We have made room here for just slight mention of hardly more than one, and of his apostolic labours in precisely that year (1845) which was to bring the first Oblates into the same mission-field. It remains to add something further concerning the experiences of the Abbé Thibault at the Grand Portage, La Loche. One of those with whom he was brought in contact was a man afterwards widely known as "Old Beaulieu of Salt River," a pagan, the son of a Montagnais mother. His father, François Beaulieu, was the Canadian who guided Alexander Mackenzie to the Arctic in 1789, and to the Pacific in 1793. The son remembered events earlier than those Mackenzie exploring expeditions, and it would seem that he himself was along with his father in the party accompanying Alexander Mackenzie. He was about a hundred years of age, and deserved the name of Patriarch Beaulieu (which he had borne for long as a devout Catholic, and the helper of Bishops and priests), when he died in 1872 at Salt River. By the way, this tributary to Slave River (on the left bank, near the north-east boundary of Alberta) really does bring down salt from the distant hills. Much farther north, too, in the neighbourhood of Fort Norman, there are salty tributaries of the Mackenzie. A very true Godsend in both places for the poor eaters of fish, or even of caribou. The Salt River Patriarchal Catholic of 1872 was very different in character from the Beaulieu of La Loche of 1845. That Beaulieu, a big and powerful and fearless man, was the chief bully or bruiser of the North-West Fur Company (French) at Great Slave Lake, and as such he had killed his man, the trader of the Hudson Bay Company, who was suspected of responsibility for the drowning of the trader of the rival Company. Beaulieu was seized and bound before he could reload his murderous gun. His captors advised him to change his defiant attitude, to let the past be past, go back no more to the French post, take service

under the Hudson Bay Company as *their* bully, and name his own price. He agreed, and he served the English Company faithfully for the rest of his life. This famous half-breed had immense influence with the Indians. Besides being practically one of themselves, he was far more intelligent, and he was able to use his physical strength to terrify all opponents into compliance with his wishes. He was the accepted chief of all the Indians of his neighbourhood. The victim already mentioned was not the only man killed by this Beaulieu, who seems to have known little of his father's religion, and to have been in all respects a mere pagan. According to Déné custom, he had several "wives," sometimes seven, never less than three. When such a man turned to look for the Blackrobe, and to wish to be taught to pray, surely the hour for conversions had struck, and it was God's own good time.

And this was precisely the thing that came to pass. In the spring of the year, there came to Fort Resolution, Great Slave Lake, a young Canadian, named Dubreuil, to be a subordinate of Beaulieu, who was in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company's fort or trading post. He was a quiet, charitable, obliging, and obedient young man. Beaulieu took great notice of his kneeling down every morning and night, and making a great sign of the cross as beginning and end of his devotions. Beaulieu inquired what it all meant, and then asked if he also might learn something about God, and the blessed Virgin Mary, and might learn to love them, and to pray to them. Whilst he was receiving some instructions from Dubreuil, the word went round among the tribes that the Blackrobe would be at La Loche in the summer season. The Canadian said to Beaulieu: "You ought to go to him. That is the man of prayer. That is the priest. He will teach you what you have to do in order to serve God, and to save your soul." Thereupon Beaulieu, like Jacob of old (Gen. xxxi 17), rose up, took his children and his wives in his longest and largest canoe, and went his way southwards to La Loche Portage, with many Indian followers. His meeting with Abbé Thibault meant his sincere conversion, and from that date "he never looked back." After his baptism, he settled down at Salt River, half-way between Great Slave Lake and Lake Athabaska, and he spent the rest of his long life in penance and piety, and in assisting the missionaries to do good. When he knew the missionary was coming down the river, or up the river, or through the snow, he went forward to meet him, installed him in a little room of his house, which served

for a chapel, and left nothing undone to provide for him in so far as he was able. Beaulieu learned to be sacristan and catechist, and his long-established authority over the Indians added great force to the orders and instructions which he gave them as the translation or comment after the words of the Blackrobe. It was from Beaulieu that Father Gascon, O.M.I., learned Montagnais. The time came when Beaulieu met, with special veneration, the Great Chief of Prayer, Mgr. Grandin, who on his part had much esteem for the devout old *métis*. In 1861, the Bishop blessed for Beaulieu a high cross, erected on a headland by the river side. To this cross, for the rest of his life, the "Patriarch" made a little pilgrimage every day. Even in the coldest weather he knelt on the bare ground, bare-headed, reciting his rosary, with tears (with his conversion, he got the gift of tears, Mgr. Faraud said) begging pardon for his past sins, praying for his family and for his tribe, for the living and the dead, and for all to whom he had at any time done evil. Before the arrival of the Grey Nuns in that north country, Beaulieu had been the means of bringing up a hundred little orphans to be good Christians and good hunters too. When drawing near his end, this devout convert visited places where he had given scandal in his pagan days, and by his visit, by word and act, he made amends for the misdoings of the days of his ignorance.

In quite recent years, one of the sons of Beaulieu, who was with his father at La Loche in 1845, described how the Montagnais made a great tent of branches, in which the priest preached three times a day. All the people were willing to be baptized, and to fulfil all the conditions required. Abbé Thibault baptized only the children, and a selected number of the adults, but he promised to come again the following year. On his way back to St Anne's, he met at the Fort of the Prairies (now Edmonton) the famous Jesuit missionary, Father de Smet, who had been abandoned by his guide, but had at last found a welcome at the hands of the Irishman, chief factor Rowand.

In 1846, on March 4, Abbé Thibault set out for La Loche Portage from Lake St Anne, but various difficulties and accidents made his journey very slow. He took "two months for a journey of two weeks." At last he reached Ile à la Crosse, where the missionary's heart was deeply wounded. The Indians had left, as he was so late in arriving, and, what was worse, they had been told not to listen to him; that he was making money by baptizing them; and that

Baptism and the prayer were not for them, but only for people made of white clay; that they would grow sick and die; that the priest was only laughing at their simplicity; and that, in any case, they would never see him again, as he had been killed by the Blackfeet. At Ile à la Crosse, therefore, Abbé Thibault could find no guide or interpreter. Being abandoned by his frightened poor people, he could go no farther, although he had intended to push on even beyond La Loche, as far north as Great Slave Lake. He returned in sorrow to Lake St Anne, not knowing that as he had planted in 1845, so his tears were watering in 1846, and God was on the point of giving the increase. Two months after the departure of the discouraged missionary from Ile à la Crosse, two other missionaries arrived there from the Red River, and laid the foundations of what may be called the Catholic Déné nation by establishing themselves at Ile à la Crosse, in the north-west centre of what is now Saskatchewan. These two zealous priests were Abbé Laflèche, and his assistant, Father Taché, O.M.I., who was younger by four or five years. The first (who remained for ten years longer in the Indian missions) became well known for his piety, eloquence, and courage as Bishop of Trois Rivières (or Three Rivers) in Canada, where he died only in 1898. The second succeeded Bishop Provencher at St Boniface, of which he became the first Archbishop, closing a glorious missionary career in 1894. Abbé Laflèche was the last of the secular priests, Father Taché the first of the Oblates, to preach the Gospel to the Indians of the Canadian North-West. Such priests as the Abbés Thibault and Laflèche were the missionaries whom Bishop Provencher had always been trying to secure for his immense diocese—that is to say, men like himself, proof against all discouragement and all hardship. In a quarter of a century Canada, or, let us say, Quebec, had given him a dozen such priests. The number was very small, and what was the Bishop to do when one after another died, or was invalided, or returned to the east? The Bishop had been for long looking for some religious society to assist him. Mgr. Bourget, Bishop of Montreal, was his agent. The lately restored Jesuit Fathers were not free to respond to his call. It was only in 1842 that they were able to return even to the banks of the St Lawrence. Mgr. Bourget, who had visited Mgr. de Mazenod in Marseilles, had succeeded in obtaining for his own diocese a few Oblates of Mary Immaculate, members of a small society of missionaries approved by the Holy See only in 1826. In favour of the North-West, he appealed

for help to the same quarter, and in 1845 Father Peter Aubert and Alexander Antoninus Taché landed at St Boniface. The first was of mature age, and, by a strange variety of fortune, he was one of the besieged residents of Paris in 1870-71. Brother Taché was too young to be ordained priest, and therefore in the first moment was a disappointment to Bishop Provencher, who very soon desired to have him for his coadjutor.

In 1918, St Boniface kept the centenary of the North-Western missions. The present Archbishop of St Boniface, Mgr. Béliveau, published a Pastoral summarizing the work of one hundred years. A portion of this Pastoral may gratefully be quoted here, as the conclusion of this chapter in which we have sought the signs and tokens of God's own time appointed for the conversion of the Far North and West. The Pastoral makes due mention of Quebec and France—the missionary countries to which the Church of the North-West owes its beginnings and its marvellous progress—and proceeds to say in reference to Mgr. Provencher, the founder of that rising Church:

“In 1845 his desires were realized. In the coming of Father Aubert and Brother Taché, he saw the sure future, and he was ready to sing his *Nunc Dimittis* weighed down rather by labours and infirmities than by years. It is very pleasing to me, the humble successor of that first Bishop of St Boniface, to render homage to the religious Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate for all that they have done in developing the work of Mgr. Provencher. That great prelate was indeed the founder of our Church, but it may truly be said, and in mere justice it must be said, that the Oblates very gloriously share with him the honours of the foundership. Without them, what would have been the result of all the toil and all the sacrifices of the first Bishop of St Boniface? The Oblates, in truth, have been the missionaries of the West, and the now flourishing Churches, planted by their labours, developed by their devotedness, and matured by their persevering carefulness, can never proclaim too loudly their indebtedness to those pioneers. The motto of the Oblates is that of our divine Master himself, *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me*. Nowhere could it be more appropriate than in the immense wilds of the Canadian North-West. There, indeed, are the poor and the disinherited. What hearts of fire were needed for those who were to be the apostles of the Faith upon the frozen lakes of the North, and even unto the Arctic Sea !”

Mgr. Béliveau, in the same Pastoral, mentions the present ecclesiastical subdivisions of what was once the Red River Mission, or Vicariate of the North-West, or Diocese of St Boniface. "It has been divided, not only into dioceses, but into the six ecclesiastical provinces of Oregon, Vancouver, Edmonton, Regina, Winnipeg, and St Boniface. In those territories are 300,000 Catholics, 13 Bishops, 338 regulars of different orders, 262 secular priests, and 1,580 nuns of various religious communities."

CHAPTER IX

ILE À LA CROSSE: A NURSERY OF BISHOPS

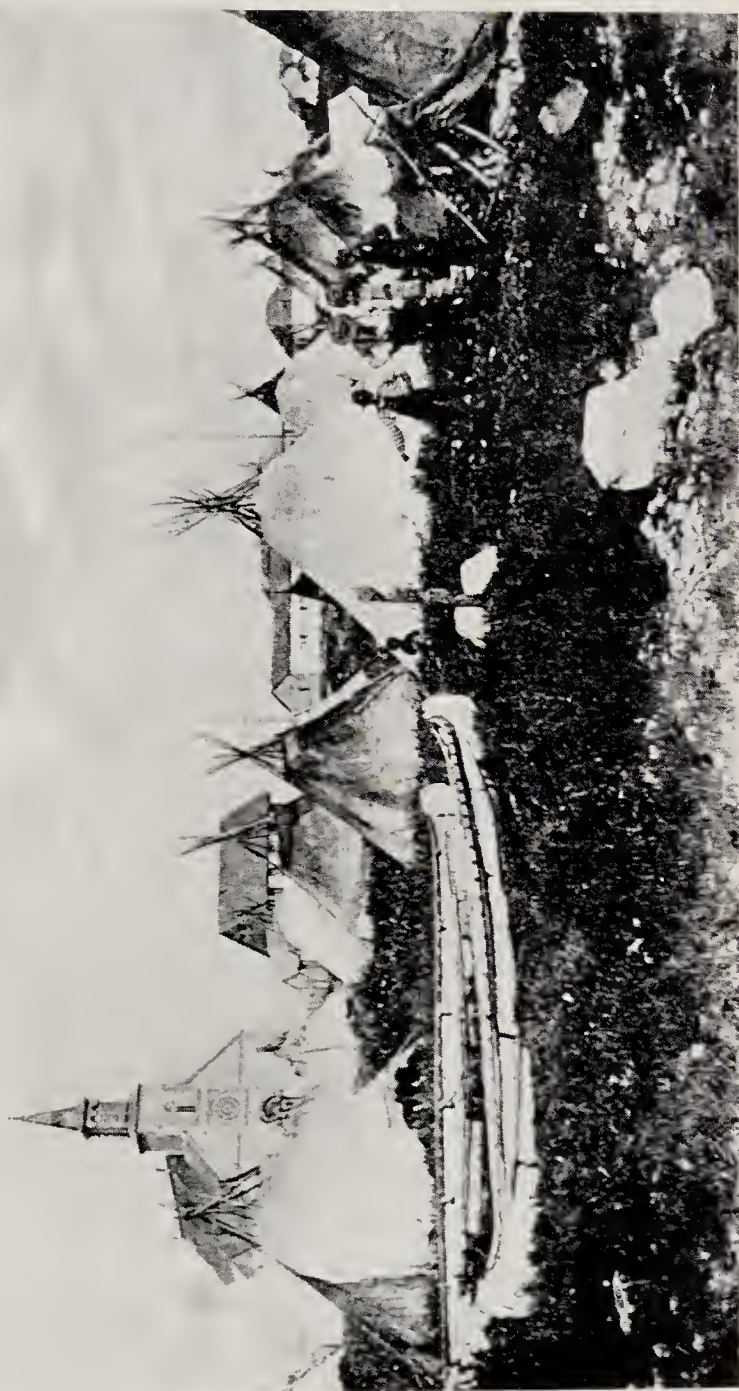
IT was at poor Bethlehem, in the winter wild, that “the heaven-born Child, all meanly clad,” was laid in the rude manger. Yet that Child was no other than “the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls” (1 Pet. ii 25). At Ile à la Crosse, a wild, and poor, and icy spot, far away from all refinement and comfort, we may consider that we see a nursery of Bishops. Ile à la Crosse, now included in the province of Saskatchewan, was in former times somewhere in the Wild West, or the North, or the Upper Country, a place where the Indians might be found, at least, in certain seasons of the year (near 110 long., 56 lat.). Yet four of the priests of Ile à la Crosse became distinguished Bishops in the Canadian Dominion. They were Mgr. Laflèche, Bishop of Trois Rivières, or Three Rivers; Mgr. Taché, first Archbishop of St Boniface; Mgr. Grandin, first Bishop of St Albert (now Edmonton); and Mgr. Faraud, first Vicar Apostolic of Athabaska-Mackenzie. To be well acquainted with these names is to know much of the history of the Church in the North-West.

Bishop Provencher, in response to the requests of Abbé Thibault, sent forward Abbé Laflèche and young Father Taché to those tribes of whose good dispositions he had received so good a report. The two priests were to go as far west and north as they could. They left St Boniface with the Bishop's blessing on July 8, 1846. By canoe and by barge they reached Ile à la Crosse on September 10. This Bethlehem of the North, as we may call it, was a central rendezvous for about 2,000 Montagnais and Cree Indians, who were accustomed to rove freely over a territory nearly as large as France. The priests made the place a religious centre, too, the first parish of the North-West, and they gave their little mission-station the name of St John Baptist, Canada's patron saint. The obliging trader of the place, Mr. Roderick Mackenzie, gave them a room to live in until it would be possible to build something. They began to learn the Montagnais and Cree dialects from a blind Indian, who knew no French. The Sauteux, which they had

studied together at the Red River, was of no service in their new abode. "Cree," said Father Taché, "is not a difficult language, but Montagnais, as regards pronunciation, is difficult beyond all that I could have thought it possible to imagine." "I am afraid," wrote Father Lafleche, "that the uvula will be dragged out by the roots, so extraordinary are the contortions which the tongue has to make."

At the approach of spring in 1847, before the melting of the snows, Father Taché went to Green Lake, about fifty miles to the south, in order to baptize an old Cree chief, who was ill. A fortnight after his return, he fastened on the snow-shoes once more, and visited Reindeer Lake, a large body of water about 200 miles to the north-east. He reached that lake (Reindeer or Caribou) on Lady Day, March 25, 1847, and found there both Chippewayans and Crees. He was the first priest to appear in that place, and he was very well received by many of those Indians. On June 13, he was back at Ile à la Crosse, where, along with his "angelic companion," as he called the elder priest, he continued his studies of the native languages, helped in catechizing the Indians, preparing a church, and making a little garden.

On August 20, 1847, Father Taché, with two Indians and a young half-breed, set out in a canoe for Lake Athabaska, 200 miles to the north. At La Loche Portage, he preached a mission to those adults whom Father Thibault had baptized. As he did not think himself master of the Montagnais language, he had each discourse translated by a very intelligent trapper, and a very good Christian man, Antoine Morin, whose translation gave full satisfaction to all the hearers. One of the instructions was on chastity, a virtue which Antoine assuredly had been practising—as the bourgeois had been speaking prose—without knowing its name. Father Taché was rather taken aback when he heard Antoine's repetition of this discourse. He feared he might have been preaching "over the heads of his audience," as a preacher sometimes will, whether young or old. Antoine said: "Our Father, the Blackrobe, tells us we must hold the summer chase also (*la chasse d'été*). Hunting in the winter is not enough, as we lazy Montagnais may imagine. But mind me now, my friends! This summer chase is very far from easy. To get near the caribou in the woods, much precaution is needed, for they hear us even a long way off. And then we must beware of the enemy, the *dénédjéré*, who lies in wait for us in many a thicket. Run, whenever you see him. Moreover, the women must



AN INDIAN CAMP

be kept at a distance. They must not any longer be allowed to come to the summer hunt, for fear they might eat the muzzles of the animals taken, and then we could have no good luck in the chase. The women were certainly very useful in drying the meat which we brought in. But the Blackrobe has spoken, and of course we must follow his instructions." We must remember that there was a taboo among the Dénés in regard of the reindeer's snout. If a woman ate it, there was no chance of shooting another deer.

From the portage, Father Taché continued his voyage northwards to Lake Athabaska, where, in a three weeks' mission, he baptized 194 persons, mostly Chippewayans.

On October 5, 1847, he was once more at home at Ile à la Crosse, where the priests' hut was nearly finished, owing to the kindness of Mr. Mackenzie. It had been built of great logs and clay. The two priests set to work to make it almost storm-proof by filling the chinks with mud. "But the wind," said Father Taché, "was so displeased with our want of hospitality, that it came roaring down the chimney, blinding us with smoke in the most revengeful fashion. We put up with this for a fortnight. Then, to escape being turned into smoked hams, we made another chimney. Poor as we are, we are in our own house, we are content with our lot, and in our cabin we enjoy such peace and happiness as cannot always be found in the palaces of the great. Our only hardship is Abbé Lafèche's bad health, caused by continuous excessive labour. His old rheumatism has developed into painful swellings and sores."

The sufferer himself gaily wrote at a later date: "I am punished for remaining lazily at Ile à la Crosse all the summer. When God Almighty took away the chronic painful rheumatism, he left me the lameness as a reminder." In fact, Bishop Lafèche, even in his civilized home on the banks of the St Lawrence, went limping all his days, "halted on his foot," like Jacob, who had wrestled with an angel (Gen. xxxii). In 1847, whilst the elder priest was failing, Father Taché was very vigorous. Very few could keep pace with him on snow-shoes, and he was perfectly at home in a canoe, even if "the rapids were near, and the daylight past."

The respective positions of Fathers Lafèche and Taché were not always the same. The time came when the intrepid voyager of 1847 was not able to leave his house at St Boniface, whilst his brother Bishop was in sufficiently good health to cross continents and seas. There was also

a time when Mgr. Laflèche, sound in body, had to endure most keen suffering of mind, and when Mgr. Taché hastened to his side to comfort him, claiming the privilege of the infirmarian of old days at Ile à la Crosse.

His services as infirmarian were indeed sorely needed at Ile à la Crosse in the winter of 1847-48. But both sufferer and infirmarian were very happy in spite of all their crosses and discomforts.

In the summer of 1848, a distinguished Arctic explorer, naturalist, and author, was at Ile à la Crosse, on his way to the Farthest North. This was the Scottish Sir John Richardson, who afterwards wrote in his *Arctic Searching Expedition* (I. 104): "June 25, 1848.—The day being Sunday, our voyageurs went to Mass at the Roman Catholic chapel, distant about a mile from the fort. The mission was established in 1846, under the charge of Monsieur Laflèche, who has been very successful in gaining the confidence of the Indians, and gathering a considerable number into the village round the church. In the course of the day I received a visit from Monsieur Laflèche, and his colleague Monsieur Taché. They are both intelligent and well-informed men, and devoted to the task of instructing the Indians."

In July, 1848, another visitor reached Ile à la Crosse, but he went to stay. It was Father Faraud, "plein de jeunesse, de force, et de bon vouloir," wrote Father Taché, who was delighted to see an Oblate once more. The two young priests made Father Laflèche their Religious Superior, and a very happy community indeed were those three future Bishops. In their old age, they used to declare that those months of 1848-49 at Ile à la Crosse were the happiest time of their lives. After their religious duties, and the service of the Indians, they were ready to laugh, to sing, and to tell tales, ready to "skip and play," as if to the tabor sound, like the proverbial lamb, never foreseeing that, in a true sense, they were "doomed to bleed" in the years that were before them. One song they never grew tired of singing—Father Laflèche musically, Father Taché *assez bien*, Father Faraud *très mal*. It was, *Vive le Nord, et ses heureux habitants!* This was equally appropriate, whether the singers were washing up the tin porringers, or roasting fish, or trying to get their teeth into pemmican, or putting logs upon the fire. Their happy months from July, 1848—three being together, except whilst Father Taché paid another visit to Lake Athabaska—were suddenly ended by two letters brought from the Red River by the post of 1849.

One, from Mgr. Provencher, called Abbé Lafèche back to St Boniface for "important affairs." The other, from Father Aubert, Superior of the nascent community of Oblates in the North-West, said to Fathers Taché and Faraud: "The Revolution in France may ruin the resources of the Propagation of the Faith. We may be obliged to abandon the work begun. At all events, you are not to go farther afield than Ile à la Crosse." The two Oblates were stunned and grieved. They knelt for a while in the little recess where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved. Then they wrote the following reply: "Your letter afflicts us deeply, but does not discourage us. We know that you have the interests of our missions at heart, and, for ourselves, we cannot bear the idea of abandoning our numerous neophytes and catechumens. We hope it will always be possible for you to send us altar breads and altar wine. We want the consolation and strength of holy Mass, and we ask nothing whatever besides. The fish of the lake will suffice for our food; the skins of the wild animals for our clothing. For mercy's sake, do not call us back."

The two Oblates knew well on what "important" business their beloved and esteemed friend was wanted at St Boniface. They would have congratulated him on being called to the episcopate, if they had not seen himself so saddened by his recall. He left Ile à la Crosse in June, 1849, and he never saw it again. There was much weeping at his departure. He had not laboured for ungrateful souls.

In autumn, 1849, Father Faraud founded the mission of Lake Athabaska (Nativity Mission, Fort Chipewyan), of which Father Taché had made some beginning two years earlier. In the years 1849-51, Father Taché served Ile à la Crosse Mission all alone, and moved up and down the immense territory which he might have called his parish. Probably he continued to sing *Vive le Nord*, even though he had no one for chorus or for audience.

The summer of 1849, then, separated three friends, who never lived together again, either in log cabin or in episcopal palace. Their varied careers, in later times, as Bishops, planters of the Faith, were such that, in any impartial history of the Catholic Church in Canada, every one of the three must occupy a very large space. We are able to make note here of a few dates and landmarks, and no more.

Louis François Lafèche (1818-98) was a college professor in Canada, and not yet a priest, when he hearkened to an appeal of Mgr. Provencher, and volunteered for the Red River Mission. Ordained in 1844, he set out on April 27,

in the usual birch-bark canoe. He remained for twelve years in the Indian missions, in spite of bad health. Before going to Ile à la Crosse, he worked among the Sauteux, in what is now Manitoba. When he was recalled to the Red River (as already mentioned), he found that the aged Bishop in St Boniface had carried far forward the negotiations for his appointment as coadjutor. We know now that Bishop Provencher had kept this appointment in view from the beginning. He said to himself that this young priest would, after all, be over thirty when the time came for his consecration. And he was very priestly, talented, educated, and studious. He spoke English fairly well, and by 1848 he knew three Indian languages, and he was the first to make a Montagnais grammar. "Best of all," said the Bishop, "he is not aware of his own qualifications." After consultation with the Archbishop of Quebec, formal application had been made to Rome in 1848, and the Bulls authorizing the consecration of Father Lafèche, in due course, reached Quebec. But the poor Bishop elect was only afflicted, and he remonstrated. He said to the first Bishop of St Boniface: "You want someone with better health and strength than yourself. Several years of suffering have left me an invalid. You want a coadjutor able to visit in your place the distant Indian missions and camps. I am less able for such journeys than yourself. During my three years at Ile à la Crosse I had to remain at home, leaving all the travelling to Father Taché."

Mgr. Provencher had to yield. He kept his admired friend near himself at St Boniface as Vicar General, who threw himself heart and soul into all the work for which he was able. In July, 1851, as he was accompanying the half-breeds in a buffalo hunt over the prairies, his squad of sixty or seventy men were suddenly assailed by 2,000 Sioux, in the neighbourhood of Turtle Mountain (North Dakota). The chaplain directed the defence with such skill and bravery and religious spirit that the Sioux hastily withdrew after a two days' siege and attack, taking away their many dead comrades. They had seen a figure in white (surplice), whom they thought a *Manitou* directing the deadly aim of his soldiers, and making them invulnerable by arrow or ball.

On June 7, 1853, Father Lafèche closed the eyes of the venerable first Bishop of the North-West, who by this time had a coadjutor—far away on a missionary expedition. Father Lafèche remained on at St Boniface until 1856. He then returned to Canada, almost invalided, though only

thirty-eight years of age. The milder and native air restored his health. He became a professor again, and afterwards Superior in his old college at Nicolet, then in the rather new diocese of Three Rivers (Trois Rivières). In 1861 the Bishop, Mgr. Cooke, placed the temporalities of the diocese in his charge, and in a few years more obtained his appointment as coadjutor. Father Laflèche was consecrated Bishop in 1867, and he succeeded to the see of Trois Rivières in 1870. His coat of arms showed a canoe and an arrow, but the arrow meant his desire always to go straight to the point, as well as to aim at error. In his glorious episcopate of thirty years, he showed himself an able administrator and an eloquent preacher, the Chrysostom of the Canadian Church. Multitudes went to hear his weekly sermons in his cathedral, when he was the fearless exponent of the Catholic truth on the public questions of the day. Perhaps as many went to see him as a picture of prayer in the sanctuary. His learning and his love of country were admired even by those that were without the pale. He was the means of setting up several colleges in his diocese. He left after him half a dozen volumes of essays and pastoral letters. In the course of a pastoral visitation, when he was eighty years of age, he was unexpectedly called to his reward. On his death-bed, looking into eternity with the steady gaze with which he had faced the world, he said, "How happy one is to be a believer, when death is nigh!" In truth, this great Bishop seemed to have brought from his life on the boundless plains, and under the canopy of heaven, and from his intercourse with the simple, untutored Indians, that sure and steadfast faith which is revealed unto little ones, but is hidden from "the wise and prudent."

Alexander Antoninus Taché (1823-94) was the missionary who did become the coadjutor and successor of the great pioneer, Mgr. Provencher. His friend, Father Laflèche, recommended him, when himself saying *Nolo episcopari*. The friends of both have never said that Father Taché was the less brilliantly gifted of the two. It was impossible to praise one more than the other. The aged Bishop of St Boniface soon began to think of Father Taché as the one to continue his own work, to take up his burden when he was gone. In 1849 he wrote: "Father Taché is very talented, but he is a mere boy." A little later he wrote again: "I really think he will be the more suitable. The other is rather forgetful. Father Taché has a very good head for business. And he is very talented. And he knows the country, the Indian languages, and the missions already established.

And then the advantage of having the Oblates more closely bound to our missions. It is chiefly upon them that we must count for the evangelization of the North-West." Letters were written to the Holy See, and to the founder and Superior General of the Oblates, who had been Bishop of Marseilles for many years previous to this date. Father Taché's appointment was dated June 24, 1850, when he was just a month less than twenty-seven years of age. The Pope accepted the new name on the recommendation of the Canadian Bishops, without waiting for the opinion of the Bishop of Marseilles. The placing of an Oblate in that position of distress and difficulty, sending him on that forlorn hope, was the salvation of the missions of the North-West. Bishop de Mazenod had just listened to the most discouraging representations concerning the future of those missions. Someone (not known to us) had represented to him, probably in perfect good faith, that his spiritual sons in the North-West had been sent out to a hopeless and impossible task, sent to die of starvation, where the lives had been lost already of explorers, with all a Government's resources at their command, lives of experienced traders in the employment of one of the richest of companies. The Founder had been told that that utterly inhospitable and uninhabitable North country would simply be the grave of his nascent Religious Institute. Pondering these things with his councillors, Mgr. de Mazenod actually decided to withdraw the Oblates, few in number, who were then in the Canadian North-West. Just then came the (somehow delayed) letter of Mgr. Provencher, and the news of Pope Pius IX's actual nomination of Father Taché as Bishop. From his centre at Ile à la Crosse, Father Taché was visiting scattered camps of Dénés and Crees, when letters reached him, in February, 1851, calling him to St Boniface. The Bishop had sent for him, and his Religious Superior had written in the same sense. Father Taché was distressed by the news given him, but a letter from the Superior General which he found at St Boniface desired him to come to Europe. Mgr. de Mazenod had reconsidered his first decision, and had come to look upon the Papal act as an intervention of Providence binding the Oblates to the work begun in a very unpromising field. He wished to see the young Canadian Oblate, and to be his consecrator.

In 1865, Mgr. Taché, in his *Vingt Années de Missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique*, told of his interview with the Bishop of Marseilles. The young Oblate priest spoke of his youth, and other shortcomings, or difficulties. "The Pope

has spoken," said the founder; "his voice is the voice of God." "All my wish is to remain an Oblate," said the devoted disciple. "Most certainly," said Mgr. de Mazenod; "no one is more a Bishop than I am, and surely no one is more an Oblate; the plenitude of the priesthood is no hindrance to that perfection to which a Religious ought to aspire! You are not going to oblige me to write to the Pope that he must insist!" After tears on one side, and a paternal embrace on the other, the matter was concluded. Father Taché was to be all the more Oblate, being appointed the Religious Superior of his brethren. He was consecrated on November 23, 1851, in the Cathedral of Viviers, in the south-east of France, by Mgr. de Mazenod, one of the co-consecrators being the Bishop of Viviers, Mgr. Guibert, O.M.I., afterwards Cardinal Archbishop of Paris. The other Bishop was Mgr. Prince, a Canadian prelate who had made the voyage to Havre with Father Taché. The youthful Bishop visited Rome, and had two audiences of Pius IX. At the end of February, 1852, he sailed from Liverpool, where he found poverty-stricken Holy Cross parish, O.M.I., in its beginnings.

A few weeks later, in company with Father Grollier and a young secular priest who was to become the immortal Blackrobe voyageur, Father Lacombe, he left Montreal, not in a birch-bark canoe, as in 1845, but in a steamer. Missing the canoes for Lake Superior and the Red River, the travellers went to Detroit, from which on May 24, 1852, the day on which the new line was opened, they took the train to Chicago. Thence, through the plains of Illinois and by the Mississippi, they reached St Paul, Minnesota, on the 29th. From St Paul, on horseback or in carts, they pushed forward—very literally—as far as Pembina and St Boniface, reaching "home" at last on June 27, 1852, without being molested by the Sioux, who killed one traveller and wounded another soon after the missionary caravan had passed. At St Boniface the Bishop and all the settlers were in great distress, because a flood, "equal to that of 1826," had carried away whole houses. But the coming of the coadjutor and two priests brought joy to the heart of the aged Bishop. From that date (1852 to 1894) lasted the episcopal career of Mgr. Taché, a career very laborious, and fruitful, and full of trials.

When the nineteenth-century pioneer of the North-West Missions, Mgr. Provencher, asked for and secured the appointment of Bishop Taché, he put his hand to a work which, in a purely spiritual view, may quite appropriately

be compared with that of Pope St Gregory, who sent out St Augustine to Canterbury at a time "when barbarians occupied the earth, when pestilence, famine, and heresy ravaged far and near." It is not meant to compare the Red Indians with European races, which were to have a future. But it does not appear that St Augustine, or St Rémi, in baptizing Saxon or Sicamber, had any longer views than the Oblate who poured the waters of regeneration over the head of the Yellow-knife or Hare-skin. The intention in all the cases was the same—to bring those "pagans within the Church's pale," and to make them sharers in the gospel of God's grace. Indeed, St Gregory sent out his Benedictine missionaries "when all things were now failing," as Cardinal Newman says, and "in what he augured were the last moments of the world."

The appointment of an Oblate of Mary Immaculate as Bishop for what was civilly called Rupert's Land, or the Hudson Bay territories, and the acceptance of that unforeseen Papal appointment as a manifestation of the Divine Will, meant a continuous supply of priests to a land wild and lone, where much hardship had to be endured day after day and year after year. This continuity was precisely the need of the time, but most difficult to make sure. Mgr. Provencher on November 19, 1852, writing to Mgr. de Mazenod in praise of his coadjutor, after playful reference to his delayed letter to the Superior General, said: "I have only four secular priests, and the Canadian Bishops have not priests enough for themselves. Suffer your sons to be the cultivators of this part of the Lord's vineyard. Assuredly, it is not ground easy to keep and to dress. But there are hardships in all missionary countries—cold, heat, hunger, prisons, and death. The important thing is that there is as straight a road to heaven from here as from any place under the sun."

Bishop Taché was specially fitted for the rôle which he filled as chief leader of the apostles of the North-West. His father, Charles Taché, belonged to one of the oldest Canadian families, his paternal grandfather having come from Guienne in 1739. The grandmother of Charles Taché was the granddaughter of Joliette (the discoverer with Father Marquette of the Mississippi in 1673), and connected with Louis Hébert (the Paris apothecary who was "the first to raise a golden harvest" in the fields of New France), and others of the earliest colonists. Charles Taché (the Bishop's father), born in 1785, was a captain under de Salaberry in the American War, 1812-16. A

younger brother of Charles, and the godfather of the Bishop, was Sir Etienne Pascal Taché (1795-1865), one of the "Fathers of Confederation" with Sir John MacDonald. Sir Etienne served as an ensign in the war of 1812. He was Deputy Adjutant-General of the Canadian Militia in 1846, and A.D.C. to the Queen in 1860. He became Prime Minister of Canada in 1856, and again in 1864, Sir John MacDonald being Attorney-General and leader of the Lower House on both occasions. Sir Etienne Taché was called the Sir Roger de Coverley of Canada, and the phrasing of the compliment shows that it was paid to this devoted Catholic of French origin by men of another race and religion. Like Sir Etienne, the Bishop's own eldest brother was also a distinguished Parliamentarian. The Bishop's mother, Louise Henriette de la Broquerie, was a descendant of Pierre Boucher de Boucherville, who reached Canada, aged thirteen, in 1635. Pierre, of whom Father Lalande, S.J., has written much in *Une Vieille Seigneurie, Boucherville*, was a brave soldier, saved the colony from an Iroquois invasion in 1651, was ennobled by Louis XIV, was Governor of Trois Rivières for many years, built himself the manor-house of Boucherville (still standing), and died there in 1717, leaving about one hundred grandchildren, including seven priests and thirteen nuns. A great-grandson of this Pierre was de la Vérandrye (wounded at Malplaquet), the discoverer (1731-34) of the Canadian North-West from Lake Superior to the Rocky Mountains (the Red River, the Saskatchewan, and the Upper Missouri). Among the many near relations of the Boucher de la Broquerie family, and therefore of Madame Taché, was the Venerable Mother d'Youville, the foundress of the Grey Nuns (1701-71). The Bishop's mother, Madame Taché, was richly gifted by nature and by grace. Alexander was the third of the five children, of whom she was left (in 1826) the widowed mother at the age of twenty-eight. He was born on July 23, 1823, and was baptized the same day in St Patrick's Church, Rivière du Loup (Fraserville). His birthplace and Boucherville, where he spent many of his early years, are on the banks of the St Lawrence. The manor of Boucherville was full of memories of the Venerable Margaret Bourgeois (a foundress), and of the illustrious Father Marquette, S.J., as well as of Madame Taché's own ancestors.

In 1833 Alexander entered the Catholic college of the town of St Hyacinthe. For his theological studies, he went in 1841 to the Grand Seminary of Montreal. Two months after his entrance there—viz. (as he himself used to tell in

after years), on the feast of St Francis Xavier, December 3, 1841—when going with his fellow-seminarists to the cathedral, he saw at the Bishop's house Fathers Honorat and Telmon, O.M.I., who had arrived, with two other Fathers and two lay Brothers, from France the day before. Their appearance and the cross they wore made an impression on him. He thought of joining them. He met with difficulties, but not from his pious mother. He became an Oblate novice in 1844. During a grave illness of his mother, and while he prayed fervently for her recovery, he made (as far as might be) a promise to God to devote himself to those North-West missions of which he had often thought, on account of Father Marquette and his own blood relations, the de la Vérandryes. He was allowed to volunteer for those missions, and he set out with Father Aubert in 1845. He was only a subdeacon then. He had received the tonsure from Bishop Powers of Toronto, and orders from Bishop Bourget of Montreal. He was only a novice, but the canonical rule about noviceship for a full year in the same house was not so strict in those days as in these. After his sixty-two days' journey to St Boniface he was old enough to be ordained deacon. In a few weeks more, on October 12, 1845, by dispensation he was ordained priest, being twenty-two years and two months old. Before his first Mass, he made his "Oblation," the first religious profession in the Upper Country, the Canadian hinterland. The great old Bishop, the veteran Mgr. Provencher, at first thought this assistant, sent to him, far too young. And, indeed, Brother Taché looked much younger still than he really was. But, in a few weeks after his arrival, the Bishop was writing to Canada, "Send me as many Tachés and Lafleches as ever you can."

We have called the youthful Canadian Bishop specially fitted for the great rôle which he had to fill in the West. He was fitted personally as well as by descent, and training. Two short passages written by himself may be quoted to show what manner of man he was. When in 1845 he said what he thought an eternal farewell to his mother and to Canada itself, and when he reached the Height of Land from which the rivers run down towards the east, he told the world afterwards how, "as I sat by the brink, some tears mingled with the waters, and I comforted my sad heart with the notion that in due course they would wash against the banks of the St Lawrence, where a beloved mother was praying that her son might become a worthy missionary priest." At a much later date, this truly worthy

missionary wrote one of his last letters, on the occasion of the golden jubilee of his old friend, Mgr. Laflèche, to the friend, he said, whom everyone loved, but whom he claimed the privilege of loving more than all others. To him he said: "The hand which traces these lines is the same which, during many months, used to dress your sores, and try to lessen your pains. The heart which dictates them is the same which, these fifty years, has thanked God for having known you, having lived by your side, in admiration of your most priestly life. You were my master and model in our missionary career together." A month after this letter was written, the Bishop of Three Rivers was at St Boniface, to pronounce, with tears, the funeral oration of his friend of Île à la Crosse.

In the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Mgr. Taché is said to have been "a brilliant scholar and an eloquent preacher." His gifts from God included a very retentive memory, along with a love of study, a sound and calm judgement, a quick insight into the real merits of any case which came before him, and (as Mgr. Provencher had noticed in the very beginning) a practical capacity for the details of business. With these gifts went a wonderful tenderness of heart—under perfect control, even when it made him suffer—a most lively faith, a love of God, and God's glory, and men's salvation, which made it impossible for him to seek wealth or rank, earthly happiness or home, or any worldly good.

His "scholarship" and his "eloquence" were made manifest by his writings and his sermons. He was able to enlighten and to move. He wrote to make his adopted country known, with its missionary needs, and also to defend his flock. He preached to bring home to the Catholics of the civilized world their own blessings, and to beseech them to help in bringing the same blessings within the reach of those who seemed most to need them. Judge Dubuc (of the Manitoba Supreme Court) used to tell how, in Montreal in 1861, he had heard the youthful Bishop, beginning with *Transivimus per ignem et aquam*, tell of the burning of his poor cathedral, and the ruin of St Boniface by a flood. The preacher's eloquent language, his voice, his manner, electrified the audience, and conquered all hearts, said the Judge.

So equipped, as history describes him, the young Canadian Bishop in 1852 set out upon his task of evangelizing many nations of the native races and great numbers of *métis* settlers. Ideal missionary as he was, taking the largest

Catholic views, he might justly have said, like his saintly consecrator, "No one is more a Bishop than I am, and no one is more an Oblate." His Oblate Cross he kept with loving care, even whilst wearing the Bishop's Pectoral Cross. On the usual solemn occasions, he publicly renewed his vows with his brethren. Like Solomon, he placed by his side, in honour, the mother to whom he owed his throne. The Oblate Cross, which he pressed to his dying lips, is now an inspiration to missionary zeal in the juniorate which his successor was able to set up at St Boniface, along with a diocesan seminary.

The devoted Oblate Bishop, Mgr. Taché, was the saviour of the missions of the North-West, first of all because of his appointment, contrary to his own wishes, and still more by his willing and self-sacrificing efforts during more than forty years. He began with a very small missionary staff, and in a mostly pagan land, and amid distress and difficulty of every kind. Long before the end, he saw a fairly well organized and equipped ecclesiastical province.

We have said that the newly consecrated coadjutor returned home to Bishop Provencher on June 27, 1852. He was in haste to go into the North, where he was much needed. Mgr. Provencher, blessing him as requested, when he set out for Ile à la Crosse on July 8, said: "Remain in the North until the new missionaries know the languages and the ways of the country; you will be most wanted there; stay on, even if I take it into my head to die! We shall meet in heaven."

To stay in the Northern missions was precisely what Bishop Taché himself also thought to be his duty. His presence was much wanted there. The successive departures of Fathers Lafleche, Faraud, and Taché had been a misfortune, from the spiritual point of view, for the settlement of Ile à la Crosse. Two young Oblate Fathers, who had been sent there, could not speak the Chippewayan language, and were slow in learning it, and therefore were not up to the mark of the Indian standard of intelligence. The young Bishop, the new Chief of Prayer, arrived at Ile à la Crosse, with Father Grollier, in the night of September 10-11, 1852. In the North, then, he remained for long, travelling by day and by night, on snow-shoes or in canoe, and making himself all to all, if so he might gain many to the knowledge and practice of the Christian religion. His task was heavy. In the North country there were whites, half-breeds, and Indians. The whites were, in common parlance, English and French, though those of English

speech came mostly from the Scottish Highlands and the Orkneys. All these, and their descendants, were almost strangers to the Catholic religion, the "French" of course because they had hardly begun to see a priest, and had no schools. In the eighteen-fifties, there may have been three or four thousand Europeans in what was called indifferently the North or North-West. The half-breeds may have been over 14,000. The purely native races were in twenty different tribes or nations, belonging to four larger groups or families—viz., the Algonquins (Sauteux, Maskegons, and Crees), Assiniboines (Sioux in U.S.A.), Blackfeet (Sarcees, Piegans, Bloods), and the Chippewayans or Montagnais, who have many subdivisions. The Eskimos are by some called a fifth Indian family. By others they are counted separately from the Indians. There may have been 50,000 or 60,000 persons of all these native races in the Canadian North-West seventy years ago.

Among these, Bishop Taché and some newly arrived Oblates, and a few other priests, pursued their labours with zeal, whilst the great old pioneer Bishop at St Boniface was calmly chanting his *Nunc Dimittis*. He was willing indeed to be dismissed in peace, after thirty-five years of toil and trouble. He had in his diocese (immense, no doubt), along with four secular priests, eight Oblates and two Brothers; he had a community of nuns at St Boniface, and the beginning of another such community in another settlement, about twenty miles distant. He had also a classical school, which in later years the Jesuit Fathers accepted from Mgr. Taché as the College of St Boniface. Above all, he had the assurance that his own work, so well begun, would not be checked or changed by a new Bishop, or by delay in finding one. Mgr. Provencher finished his apostolic career by a holy death on June 7, 1853. Even when the news reached Mgr. Taché in July at Ile à la Crosse, he continued at his task of consolidating the Northern Missions. But he wrote from La Loche River on July 22, 1853, both in private letters, and in a report published in the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*, a glowing panegyric of the first Bishop of St Boniface. The barges which had brought the summer mail, and the news of the Bishop's death, went on towards Lake Athabaska the same night, and Bishop Taché went with them, at 4 a.m., July 19, 1853.

It was on one of his many journeys during his continued absence from St Boniface that he ran a risk which tells a great deal. He was travelling on snow-shoes, with young

Father Végreville, whom the founder had sent for from France. Late in the day the Bishop, who had eaten nothing since his fish breakfast, fainted and fell in the snow. He recovered, and again went on. They were within a few miles of their destination. Marching with difficulty and perspiring, the Bishop fainted a second time. Recovering once more, he told Father Végreville that if he fainted a third time, his companion must scoop a hole in the snow, leave him there, go on in all haste to the mission, and send out the dog-sled. This was what had to be done, as the only way of saving the Bishop's life. The perspiration freezing on the body of the "buried" Bishop brought him back to consciousness out of his third fainting fit. He got up, in order to preserve some vital heat by marching as steadily as he could. He was really ready to drop again when he saw afar off the sled coming in all haste to his rescue.

The nature of the many journeys of this missionary Bishop, and of his companions, may be partially understood from the fact that in one such expedition he spent sixty-three nights in the open air. In that same year (1853-54) of which we are speaking, the youthful Father Grollier, beginning his ten years' "martyrdom of the cold," lost his way on the shores of Lake Athabaska, and was without food for five days. When found, he was not merely exhausted physically; he was really out of his mind as well, and so remained for a week.

In March, 1854, Bishop Taché had come south again as far as Fort Pitt (on the Saskatchewan River, somewhat near the modern Lloydminster). He was greatly distressed to find how prevalent among the Indians visiting that post were drunkenness, immorality, robbery, and murder. Some Palefaces were selling "fire-water" to the Indians, whilst others tried to teach them religion. The Bishop next visited the Fort of the Prairies, now Edmonton, where Father Lacombe met him. Both were hospitably entertained by Mr. Rowand, the chief factor. There was a week's mission, during which, on Lady Day, March 25, 1854, the Bishop confirmed seventeen persons. The persons, the souls, were what he always went out to seek. He had not cared, he wrote, to notice the great herds of buffaloes, which they saw every day of the six days which it took to cross the prairies from Fort Pitt to Edmonton. The buffaloes had trodden the snow quite hard; but the Bishop was thinking of other hordes—the poor Indians, "sheep without a shepherd, when the snow shuts out the sky."

From Edmonton, the Bishop went, by dog-sled, a long

day's journey farther westward, to Lake St Anne, already mentioned. There he found another new missionary, Father Rémas, who was to devote many long years to the North-West. The new priest wept with joy to meet his Bishop in such a place, and the new Bishop wept in sympathy!

The Bishop spent three weeks at Lake St Anne, including Holy Week, preaching, catechizing, and hearing confessions every day. He baptized twenty-two adults, and confirmed ninety-eight persons. On Easter Monday, April 17, 1854, he started on horseback, with Father Lacombe and Father Rémas, for Lake La Biche. Twelve hours' riding brought them to Edmonton again, where they were welcomed once more by Mr. Rowand, and by the Catholic men of the fort. The Bishop continued his journey on the Wednesday, Mr. Rowand getting a salute fired in his honour, and Father Lacombe accompanying him for a few hours on the road. The travellers had almost to swim their horses through the river issuing from Lake St Anne, and they had to ride through primeval forests which had been devastated by many forest fires. The tree stumps were often stumbling-blocks in the literal sense, and the branches caused many a tear in the garments, and more than a tear in the eyes. Two days were spent with some Indians met upon that trail. The journey lasted six days, during which there were three days and nights of continual downpours of rain. At last, on April 26, the travellers reached at Lake La Biche the mission of our Lady of Victories. The little house there (which Father Rémas had already occupied for a time) was 12 feet long and broad, and 6 feet high. This was now the Bishop's palace, and his only chair of state was the trunk of a tree. There were many Indians at La Biche. They had come from all parts, and were well disposed. As Father Rémas was only learning the language, the Bishop heard nearly all the confessions himself. He admitted several to their first Communion, and he confirmed sixteen persons. He was very anxious to have a little church at La Biche, and he saw the possibility of providing it. In another country, the Bishop in such a case would lay the foundation stone. Mgr. Taché cut down with his own hands the first tree to be used in the erection of the log church. On May 8, 1854, he left Father Rémas all alone in his hut, among people to whose language he was still a comparative stranger. The Beaver or Castor River runs east and north from La Biche to Ile à la Crosse, and it had a strong and deep current in May, after the melting

of the snows, so that the Bishop's canoe was taken along safely and swiftly, and in the morning of May 16, after breaking a passage through the ice still clinging to the banks, he landed at Ile à la Crosse, to be welcomed by Fathers Tissot and Végreville and Brother Dubé, and a great number of Catholics. He had been seventy-nine days absent from that central mission, which we have called a nursery of Bishops. Mgr. Taché said a Mass of thanksgiving on the morning of his arrival at that mission-house of St John Baptist. During his new stay there, his poor flock gave him great consolation, as he told Mgr. de Mazenod in one of the many letters in which he begged for more priests.

At the end of May, 1854, Fathers Tissot and Végreville went away on visits to different missions, which took all their time during the rest of the summer. The Bishop, left alone, besides all his ordinary duties, took up the burden of building a church. The materials had been prepared during the winter. The Bishop was able to write to his mother on July 19, 1854, that the church was nearly finished, "not the eighth wonder of the world, but the first and foremost wonder of Ile à la Crosse."

When Fathers Tissot and Végreville returned, the Bishop with them devoted the month of September to a mission preached to the many Indians of the neighbourhood, and he prepared to go to St Boniface to take formal possession of his see, and to bless and encourage his people and his fellow-labourers there. As the season was advancing, he left before the close of the mission—viz., on September 26, 1854. He was accompanied by two Indians, and he hoped that, with their assistance in his voyage over rivers and lakes, he would reach St Boniface by All Saints' Day. This particular journey was the most trying this missionary traveller ever experienced. The cold was intense. The food was insufficient, as it depended in a measure upon the chances of the chase. Before the end of the journey, the Indians went astray upon a lake which was new to them, and the Bishop nearly died of hunger. By a wonderful providence, he saw a distant canoe to which he was able to signal. The Indian women in the boat were so frightened to see a strange figure where no human being was supposed to be, that they cried out, "Windigo (the Man-eater)!" But the family and friends were Christian half-breeds, and they soon recognized the Bishop, came to land, and knelt for his blessing. He himself was more moved than they by such a rescue. He got something to eat from his new-found friends, who also supplied the Bishop's canoe with provisions,

and instructed his men how to continue the journey. It is plain that poverty was the cause of the hunger, and of the delay. If the Bishop had not thought himself obliged to be very sparing, he would have taken a better supply of provisions, and he would have engaged new men before his first two came into a region where they had not been before.

The second Bishop of St Boniface reached his cathedral on Friday, November 3, 1854, and, kneeling there, he "offered to God his desire to serve him, and he prayed that that desire might be made efficient." On Sunday, November 5, 1854, he took possession of his see, formally and solemnly, in the presence of his flock, and of Abbé Laflèche, three Oblate Fathers, and Brother Bowes.

At the Red River, Bishop Taché was in the least backward part of his great and growing diocese. Continuing the negotiations of his predecessor, he had succeeded in bringing to St Boniface three Brothers of the Christian schools, who stayed in the Bishop's own house, a part of which was their schoolroom. Bishop Provencher himself had taught children there in earlier times. A school or college of St Boniface was afterwards taught for some years by Oblate Fathers, and again by one who is now Mgr. Cherrier, V.G., Winnipeg, and at last, in 1885, Archbishop Taché obtained the services of the Jesuit Fathers for the now well-known College of St Boniface.

Between November, 1854, and June, 1855, Mgr. Taché remained at St Boniface, immersed in affairs, and in his various duties, and in many trials to his patience and faith. Some new parishes began to be formed in Assiniboia, now Manitoba. The annual retreat for Bishop and priests took place. Repeated efforts were made to find more priests, and to encourage those who were faint-hearted. By a great effort, and with the assistance of Mgr. Bourget, the convent of St Boniface was saved from the fate with which some Canadian diocesan regulations threatened it. The first part of the college building was begun, 60 by 34 feet. The arrangement, already mentioned, for making Lake La Biche, near (on the modern map) Athabaska Landing in Alberta, the centre for supplying more cheaply the needs of the Northern missions was planned and carried out. All through his life, Mgr. Taché interested himself personally in providing and forwarding the necessities of life to the dependent distant missions.

The number of inhabitants in St Boniface about 1855 was over 1,000. There was no Winnipeg then at the other side of the river—only Fort Garry. The Bishop in 1855

visited all his parishioners. He came to know them all personally, even the poorest, men, women, and children, Canadians, half-breeds, and Indians. He was interested in all their affairs, temporal as well as spiritual. Stories of his zeal, his self-sacrifice, his sufferings, are not wanting, and Dom Benoit has left some of them on record.

The zealous young Bishop made converts, established a temperance society, and a Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. Many a time did he in person bring poor little ragged children to the devoted Grey Nuns to be brought up in their orphanage. For a quarter of a century, the Bishop and his guests at table (Fathers and Brothers) used no sugar in their tea, except on feast days.

Pembina and St Joseph were still served from the Red River in 1855, although south of the Canadian border, and in the diocese of St Paul. At the request of Bishop Cretin, Mgr. Taché visited both places early in May, being therefore absent for a week from St Boniface. On June 5, he set out on a much longer journey, returning to those Northern Missions, which demanded so much care and development. He took with him Father Grandin (the future Bishop), who was destined for Lake Athabaska, and Brother Bowes, who was to become a great builder. There were many tears shed over the Bishop's departure, and he could not help feeling sad himself. By way of the Red River, Lake Winnipeg (making a stop at Norway House), the Saskatchewan, and the English or Churchill River, the travellers reached Ile à la Crosse in six weeks—viz., on July 16, 1855. Paddling one's own canoe is supposed to be pleasant enough, but Father Grandin was surprised on this voyage to see in how much manual labour the Bishop took part. In one place he was met portaging his bed, and when Father Grandin offered to relieve him, he said, "You want to take my mitre!" The bed was carried on his head. By the end of July the little church was ready to be dedicated. But the house in which the Bishop and others spent the autumn and winter was the old one, and extremely poor. The bark of trees and mud formed the roof of the house, and of the old chapel. In September-October, Ile à la Crosse became "quite a village," so many Indians had come from distances of 50, 100, or 150 miles. The Bishop and Father Végreville preached a mission, which gave them great consolation. Their poor Indians were a truly Christian folk, praying with manifest piety, and singing with much fervour hymns in honour of the true God, whom none of them knew ten years before. In October, 1855,

the members of one, but not the last, of the expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin passed through Ile à la Crosse, on their return from the Farthest North. Bishop Taché had for long been convinced that the gallant explorer had perished. This expedition—under Mr. Stewart of Quebec—had found some objects which confirmed that view.

At Christmas, 1855, "the Great Chief of Prayer" had the happiness of seeing a great many Indians from all parts, who assembled to hear the midnight Mass, and to receive holy Communion. Some of them had been walking for five days in a season of intense cold. Never could there have been better reason to sing:

"Peuple debout, chante ta délivrance!
Noël ! Noël ! voici le Rédempteur !"

Not the Indians alone kept that Christmas well. The chief officer of the Company's fort was a Catholic Canadian. He and all the men under him received Holy Communion at the midnight Mass. The Bishop, who knew many a fort, declared the event was a prodigy. He was all in joy over the piety of the people—some representatives of the civilization of the Old World and the New, and many members of several distinct Indian nations—the majestic calm of a boundless forest, in the silent night, under a sky of countless bodies of light, messages of cheer from the same heaven, whose honour was intended by the little lights and decorations of the poor altar in that remote wilderness. The Bishop, himself deeply moved, saw many an eye in tears as he unfolded the Gospel story of love and forgiveness, and of the ever ancient beauty, which to those hearers in particular was so very new.

The month of May was something like Christmas, and on that occasion the Bishop took a census of the population of Ile à la Crosse, since he was about to pass farther on. There were half a dozen Canadians, all Catholics; five Protestants, whose nationality is not given (probably the family in charge of the fort); 650 Indians (of two tribes), of whom 150 were still pagan; and 80 half-breeds, of whom only one was a pagan. A few years later, Mgr. Taché wrote: "I have spent ten years of my life at Ile à la Crosse. I was well acquainted with the 700 Christians whom I left there, and with those who died during my time amongst them. Those poor Indians had their faults certainly. But when I consider that they were not yet under any organized system of law and order, and that their lives were governed only by the religious ideas with which we had inspired them,

I say that their virtues were wonderful. In ten years, there were only five illegitimate births among those people lately rescued from polygamy, and from a state of fallen nature in which nothing was thought a crime. In the same ten years, there had been no robbery of consequence, and there had not been even one murder." At the end of May, 1856, Mgr. Taché had been eleven months working in that central mission of Ile à la Crosse. He was one of those Bishops who do not say, "Forward," but always, "Come on." He realized also that canonical visitations are not prescribed *pro forma*, but are an important help in stirring up and maintaining religious dispositions in the flock. He set out, therefore, on May 26, 1856, on an expedition—to various mission-stations—which took him two months. He was the first Bishop who went so far north as Lake Athabaska. He noted the total number of baptisms registered in seven missions—5,137.

Returning from Lake Athabaska to Ile à la Crosse, he made a very short stay there, and was back at St Boniface on August 22, 1856. On September 14, he started for Canada and Europe. He needed to explain and prove to the Canadian Bishops, to the founder of the Oblates, and to the Holy See, the importance of appointing a second Bishop, who would be free for the North. He himself, though he had travelled 2,500 miles, had not visited the whole of his diocese, which was 1,520 miles long by 1,300 miles broad.

On November 22, he took the steamer for Liverpool. The passage was very stormy, and took sixteen days. When near the Irish coast, the waves and winds were so strong that a cannon was thrown a few feet into the air, and then sent rolling along the deck. In its next move, it broke through the engine-room, smashed the engineer's platform, and tumbled into the hold. Everyone wondered how it happened that no life was lost, and the steam-engine was not disabled, and there was no explosion. Bishop Taché wrote to his mother that he knew she and others had been recommending their vessel to the protection of the Star of the Sea. He landed in Liverpool on December 7, 1856, and sang High Mass next day, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, in the Oblate Church of the Holy Cross. He soon continued his journey through London and Paris to Marseilles, to continue his negotiations concerning a coadjutor Bishop, and more Fathers and Brothers, and Sisters of Charity. In due and slow course, he obtained nearly all that he desired.

In the first two months of the new year, 1857, he preached

in about thirty of the French cathedrals on behalf of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, to which his own diocese was so deeply indebted. The distinguished Bishop of Poitiers, Mgr. Pie, afterwards Cardinal, became on this occasion the devoted friend of the great missionary Bishop. In the beginning of April Mgr. Taché was in England again, on his way home. He saw the Oblates in Leeds, Sicklinghall, and Liverpool, and thanked God for the good they were doing among a people, poor in all else, but rich in faith. In London, the Bishop had got a free passage from London to York Factory (Hudson Bay) from Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson Bay Company, for two Fathers and a lay Brother, who were going out. The Bishop himself set sail from Liverpool for New York on his way to Montreal. At the request of the Canadian Bishops, he preached in many churches for the same purpose as in France. He supervised also the printing of prayers and catechisms in Montagnais and Cree, which he had spent many a night in correcting in the far-off missions of the North.

On October 3, 1857, he left Montreal for St Boniface, but this time by train and steamer, reaching St Paul (Minnesota) in four days. From St Paul, however, the cart road to St Boniface took twenty-four days, though there were changes and signs of improvement everywhere. On November 6, he was once more in the shadow of Whittier's "turrets twain of the Roman Mission" at St Boniface.

At the Red River for forty years, without haste, and without rest, Mgr. Taché pursued his great task as organizer and as working missionary. There is a record, in his own hand, of the rising parishes, and the Indian missions, of his diocese in 1858. Of parishes in the eastern extremity of the diocese—let us say, at the Red River or in Assiniboia (now Manitoba)—there were five, not all yet served by a resident priest. The development of these small parishes, in the more or less colonized part of the diocese, required the Bishop's presence in his cathedral town, where he had the advantage also of being in comparatively easy communication with Canada and Europe. Of Indian missions, in 1858, there were also five, each of which had dependent out-stations. At the same date, the Oblate priests (or Bishops) were eighteen, and the Brothers five in number. There were also two secular priests, one being the veteran Abbé Thibault, Vicar General. And there were twenty-six nuns, and a few Brothers of the Christian schools.

In October, 1860, the new Bishop, Mgr. Grandin, the coadjutor, was again at work in the Northern missions,

and three of the Grey Nuns, "the women of prayer," had made a beginning of convent life there at Ile à la Crosse. In the same month, Bishop Taché turned his face once more to the West and the North, to console his self-sacrificing coadjutor, and priests, and nuns, and their faithful flocks. After a trying journey, he arrived unexpectedly at Ile à la Crosse on October 30, 1860, to the great delight of all. After various arrangements planned and carried out, it was also decided between the two Bishops that there ought to be a separate jurisdiction in the North—that is, for Athabaska-Mackenzie—and that meanwhile Bishop Grandin would visit those Northern Missions.

Mgr. Taché, under circumstances of great hardship, himself visited Lake La Biche. After Confirmation there, he left, on his return to St. Boniface, on December 13, 1860. As usual, he made the journey on snow-shoes, on horseback, or with dog-sled. He visited Lake St. Anne; and he chose, along with Father Albert Lacombe, the site of a new mission, to be called St. Albert, forty miles from St. Anne, but only nine from what is now Edmonton. Of the great kindness and generosity of Mr. J. W. Christie, the Company's agent at Edmonton, Bishop Taché had much to say in connection with this journey. In a very bad season, the remaining thousand miles or so of the journey were made very easy for the Bishop by this gentleman, and his brother Alexander in the adjoining district. He passed through Fort Pitt, Carlton, Duck Lake (Manitoba), and Notre Dame du Lac, the whole journey to St. Boniface having taken fifty-five days, with forty-four winter nights in the open air. On February 23, 1861, he knelt on the tomb of his predecessor, in the ashes of his cathedral, which had been burned to the ground, as well as the Bishop's house, with all its books and archives, on December 14, 1860. In the spring, a great flood, like those of 1826 and 1852, brought further destruction to the Red River settlement, and covered the ruins and the graves of what had been the cathedral. With marvellous courage, Mgr. Taché continued his duties as Bishop, and as member of the Council of Assiniboia (the Government of what is now Manitoba), into which he had been co-opted, like his predecessor, and the Protestant Bishop.

Having first obtained the assistance of a coadjutor for distant portions of his great diocese, he next obtained from the Holy See the erection of the most distant part, the Farthest North, into the separate Vicariate of Athabaska-Mackenzie, for which Father Faraud was consecrated Bishop

in 1863. This matter of the Northern Vicariate, where the missionaries much felt the need of a Bishop amongst them, had been considered in Canada, and in Europe, in 1861, when Mgr. Taché visited Europe for the third time. He landed in Liverpool, and he visited the Oblate houses, and he was very anxious to find missionaries and teaching Brothers of English speech. After two audiences of Pope Pius IX, he left Rome on January 8, 1862, and, sailing from Liverpool with Mgr. Guigues and Father Aubert, he reached Montreal on February 28, after fifteen days of sea-sickness. In May he was "at home," near his ruined cathedral, and in 1864, passing through the valley of Qu'Appelle, he once more visited the Western missions, including Edmonton, where Brother Scollen, O.M.I., was teaching school.

For thirty years more Mgr. Taché continued his labours, always helping on the most distant missions even when under other episcopal care. Being the nearer to civilized life, and having interest also with the Hudson Bay Company, and with all ecclesiastical and civil authorities, he made himself the agent and servant of his brethren in the Farther West and in the North. So it was still when, in 1871, the growing Oblate Missions were formed into an ecclesiastical province, with St Boniface as the archiepiscopal see, having for suffragans the new diocese of St Albert (now Edmonton and Calgary and Prince Albert dioceses), under Mgr. Grandin, and the Vicariates of Athabaska - Mackenzie, and British Columbia, and some years later the Vicariate of Saskatchewan. Mgr. Taché never weakened through all his great trials, under all his heavy crosses. Yet such trials and crosses were extremely numerous. When there was no flood at Red River, there might be drought and a plague of locusts, as in 1864 and other years. But, all through his life, there came home to Mgr. Taché the truth of the answer to the grave question in the ancient hymn:

" If I find him, if I follow,
What his guerdon here ?
Many a sorrow, many a labour,
Many a tear."

Still, he knew equally well what was to come in the end thereof, and so his faith and courage never failed.

" If I ask him to receive me,
Will he say me nay ?
Not till earth, and not till heaven
Pass away."

In 1867, the great centenary festival in honour of SS Peter and Paul, and also an Oblate General Chapter, and various other reasons, brought Mgr. Taché, with several other Oblate Bishops, to Europe. Pope Pius IX then made him assistant at the Pontifical Throne. Two of the many helpers whom he secured for his missions that year were Brother Doyle and Brother Mulvihill. Always seeking to do good to his people, in temporal concerns and in spiritual, Mgr. Taché was never free from labours, and cares, and pains. "You do well to honour your Bishop to-day," said Governor MacTavish to the Catholics of the colony, on May 3, the feast of St Alexander, 1869; "he has saved this land from famine, as Joseph of old saved Egypt."

Mgr. Taché was in Rome again for the Vatican Council. In January, 1870, he was earnestly asked by the Ottawa Government to come back, to remedy the mistakes and wrong-doings of themselves and their agents at the Red River. The true story of those events has been told in English by Father Morice in his *History*, and in French by Dom Benoit in his *Vie de Mgr. Taché*. The gallant Anglo-Irish soldier, Lord Wolseley, in his *Reminiscences*, published in 1903—i.e., nearly ten years after the death of Mgr. Taché—wrote disrespectfully of the Archbishop. He was very sharply rebuked by Mr. Griffin, the Librarian of the Parliament at Ottawa, for such words about a man "honoured all over Canada." In *The Tablet* of December 19, 1903, another correspondent wrote in the same sense as Mr. Griffin. The truth about the Red River rising was that it was caused by Ottawa politicians in a hurry, and by their surveyors on the banks of the Red River, some of whom were too like the surveyors, such as Sir William Petty and his contemporaries, of whom the author of *Hudibras* wrote:

"And make an accurate survey
Of all her lands, and how they lay:
As true as that of Ireland, wherè
The sly surveyors stole a shire."

But Lord Wolseley probably wrote through want of knowledge, rather than racial or religious bigotry. The article on Mgr. Taché in the standard work of reference, the *Dictionary of National Biography*, is written with knowledge, and does justice to the Archbishop. When the late Archbishop Ireland, of St Paul, was in St Boniface in October, 1908, preacher at the consecration of the third Cathedral, he said publicly, with playful reference to the

flag of his own beloved United States, "Only for Archbishop Taché, this country might have been lifted to the stars." And on the same occasion, in friendly conversation, he used the highest terms in speaking of that distinguished prelate, comparing him with two other great men whom he had known, Gladstone and Pope Leo XIII. When Lord Dufferin, the Governor-General, visited Manitoba in September, 1877, in replying to an address from Archbishop Taché, he said: "Perhaps there is no country where the success of Catholic missionaries, in promoting the interests of civilization, has been more remarkable, or has struck deeper roots into the soil, than here." And with reference to the person of the Archbishop, the chief leader of those missionaries, Lord Dufferin added that "he was happy to meet, on the scene of his long and devoted labours, one of whom he had heard so much, and for whom he entertained a lively friendship and a profound esteem."

A greater trial to Archbishop Taché than the Red River rising of 1870 was the anti-Catholic school legislation of 1890. For seventy years a school system had prevailed which was equally fair to Catholics and Protestants, and satisfactory to both. It was the system approved of by the first Catholic Bishop in the colony. It continued to be approved and assisted by his successor, Mgr. Taché, who used all his influence in favour of equality, and, with his College of St Boniface, joined in the setting up of the University of Manitoba, which was practically Protestant. But the school system, approved by Catholics, and fair to them, was approved also by the Protestant founder of the colony (Lord Selkirk); by the Hudson Bay Company, and their various Governors, and their Council of Assiniboia; by the Imperial and Federal authorities; and by six successive provincial Parliaments with their Lieutenant-Governors. And to the continuance of this just school system the "honour of the Crown" was pledged by the Manitoba Act of 1870, when the new province entered the Dominion.

But in 1890, secularist influences, and dishonourable provincial Ministers (whose names are not worth recalling from their present obscurity), put an end to the old system of fair play, and established a school system based upon manifest injustice. This great wrong darkened the last years of Mgr. Taché's life, as Father Morice says, and probably hastened its termination. In May, 1890, a letter of his told that he had not been able to say Mass for eighteen days.

He had, indeed, for many years suffered from a very painful malady. He lingered and laboured, in mental and bodily sufferings, until, on June 22, 1894, at the age of almost seventy-one, he finished his course, mourned by multitudes in Church and State, both near and far, and eulogized most heartily even by his opponents.

CHAPTER X

TWO MORE BISHOPS

ANOTHER of the Bishops, decidedly something good coming out of the little Nazareth of Ile à la Crosse, was Henry Joseph Faraud (1823-90). He was born on March 17, 1823, at Gigondas, in the department of Vaucluse, and diocese of Avignon. His aunt, Henriette Faurie, a nun (after whom he was named), was guillotined during the great Revolution. His first note at school described him as “*brillant élève et franc tapageur*.” Surely just the man to do the work of a pioneer, as a Bishop in the wilds.

Henry's mother, however, thought him too noisy and too wild, and she scolded him severely one day, saying, “You will come to no good.” The words hurt the boy more than a blow, and his mother, seeing their effect, led him before the statue of our blessed Lady, asking the holy Mother of God to have a care of her child. From that moment, Henry became very serious; he wished to become a priest, and to enter an order consecrated to the Blessed Virgin. Nevertheless, his natural qualities remained ever the same as long as he lived. He wore his heart upon his sleeve; he could not bear shilly-shallying; he had no use for sharp practice, or even the wisdom of the serpent; he was the Israelite without guile; he walked always straightforward on the path of honour, truth, and justice, in the service of God; as each day came, he did his day's work *con amore*, and with ability, with a light heart, and a strong, steady hand.

Henry Faraud entered the Oblate juniorate—founded by Bishop de Mazenod, at Notre Dame des Lumières, in the diocese of Avignon, early in the forties—as one of its first pupils. His noviceship was spent at Notre Dame de l'Osier, in Dauphiny. He made his Oblation on September 14, 1844. He was so eager a volunteer for foreign missions that the founder allowed him to go when he was only in minor orders. On November 8, 1846, he reached St Boniface, and on May 8, 1847, he was ordained priest by Mgr. Provencher.

Father Faraud's first priestly duties took him over the prairies. But in a year he had gone very far afield. In July, 1848, as we have seen, he was at Ile à la Crosse. Though not literally all the world, yet all the North—immense enough—was before him. Though he did not know it, he was entering upon what was to be his heritage of happy toil, and of many trials, as the first Bishop of the Farthest North. He learned the Cree and Montagnais languages very quickly. He understood and liked the Indians themselves, and consequently gained their complete confidence. His intelligence, and tact, and friendliness, and good humour made him a favourite with the officials of the Hudson Bay Company. Indeed, English and Scottish folk think that they themselves are straightforward and blunt, and so they like all others to be the same.

In 1849, Father Faraud founded in permanent fashion the Mission of the Nativity at Lake Athabaska, which is very far north of Ile à la Crosse. Not only at Lake Athabaska, but also at Great Slave Lake, and on the Peace River, Father Faraud built—in the quite literal sense—all the mission-houses and chapels. He had a wonderful facility for the work of woodman and of carpenter. Yet he had hardly any tools, and the weather was usually extremely trying. But this exceptional missionary was exceptionally vigorous in body as well as in mind. He would take stock of a piece of work to be done, and would say, "It's a four days' job: I'll do it in two."

For the fifteen years before he was a Bishop, he travelled hither and thither, by canoe or on snow-shoes, visiting the Indian camps, and building up the various mission-stations. His most usual residence, or rather terminus, in the years 1849-59 was at Lake Athabaska. From there he wrote in 1859: "During my ten years here, I have succeeded in pushing matters forward for the benefit of the mission. The first year, I built a house and a chapel. The second year, I turned the swamps into fields and gardens. The third year, I built a new church, a new house, a kitchen, a stable, and a house for the men in our employment. Later on I began, and in four years I completed, a large church, which would not look too bad even in a town."

But there is a limit to human endurance. The hardy voyager, and indomitable toiler, became the victim of sciatica, which never left him. And he had other reasons for wishing, not for the first time, to retire, and to attend only to his own sanctification. From Fort Vermilion, on the Peace River (in North Alberta), on May 15, 1860,



THE MISSIO NARY BUILDING HIS HUT

he wrote to his Religious Superior and Bishop and friend, Mgr. Taché: "Is it not time for me to say good-bye to the North? It is not now a mere case of rheumatism in legs and arms: I am rheumatism all over, *A planta pedis usque ad verticem capitis*. The pains have gone on increasing, and they continue to grow. Now I will tell you a secret which may explain some seeming oddities. Long since I grew indifferent to whatever is not concerned with the glory of God. I had the wish to retire into a cloister, to go 'apart into a desert place,' and to be alone with God alone. By prayer, fasting, and mortification, I made myself ready for this final preparation for the world to come. Then, one day I was struck by the words of the Psalm, *Zelus domus tuæ comedit me*, and I thought that it might be more pleasing to God to devote my first years to the ministry, working for the salvation of souls, and afterwards to retire into a monastery. I resolved then to work for others, without neglecting myself. But I know that I cannot attend to two things at once. Since I came to Lake Athabaska, not having a moment to myself, my heart has dried up; I have lost all sense of devotion, and, thinking myself estranged from God, I have suffered a mortal sadness for eight unbroken years. To tell you the whole truth, until a few weeks ago it was my intention to return to France, and to become a Trappist or Carthusian, as one may lawfully do. But one evening, as I was renewing my vows before the little statue on the table in my hut, Mary Immaculate seemed to be reproaching me for wanting to leave the Society specially devoted to herself, after I had promised every day for nineteen years to persevere therein even until death. I cried a great deal, and then I put away altogether the idea that I had entertained for so long."

Father Faraud did not know what was before him. This *Bonus Miles Christi* was not to be allowed to lay down his arms for thirty years more, and when he did retire in 1890, it was only to Manitoba, and his retirement did not last many months. In that same year (1860) in which Father Faraud was writing down his secret thoughts, Bishops Taché and Grandin, being together at Ile à la Crosse, made it a part of their plan of campaign that there should be a Bishop free to remain among the missions of the Far North, and to do on his own responsibility whatever could be done for Athabaska and Mackenzie. They knew the state of Father Faraud's health, and yet they resolved to recommend his appointment as the first Vicar Apostolic. Bishop Grandin was to visit the Northern missions, and to send

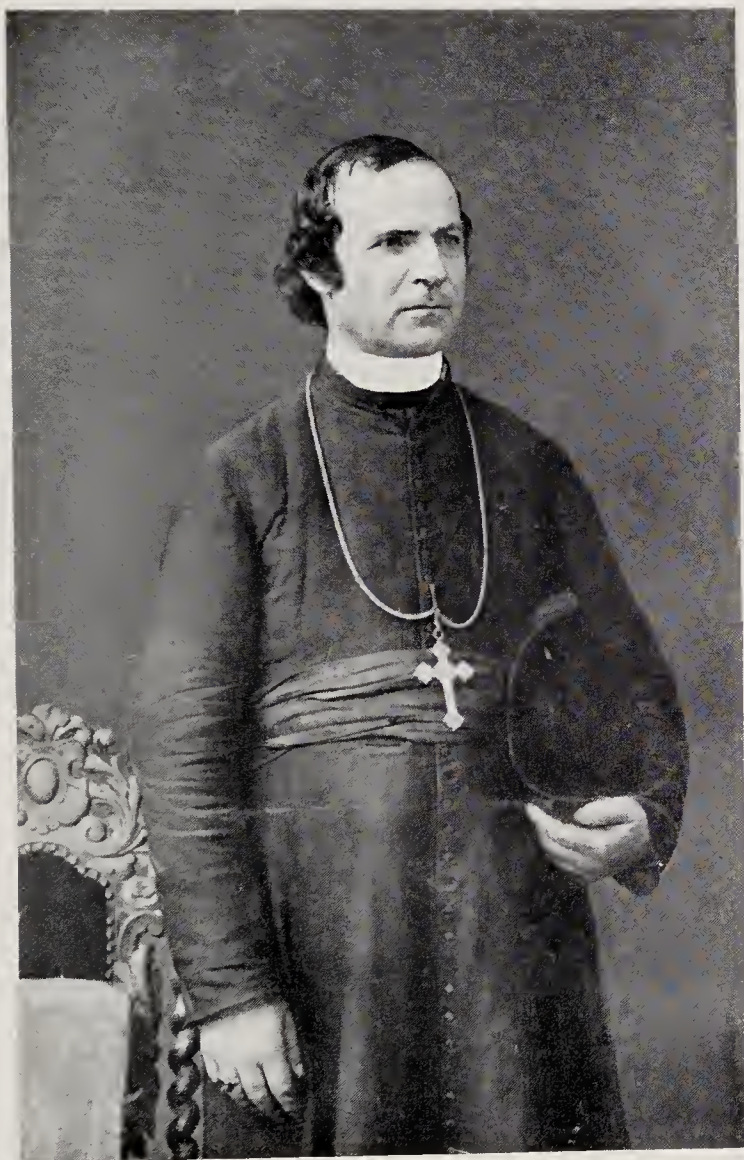
down Father Faraud to Ile à la Crosse, less for the sake of his health, than for the sake of having him not so distant from the civilized world, when Bishop Taché might have a very important communication to send him.

Father Faraud had been a year and a half at his old home of Ile à la Crosse, working and suffering, and lamenting his "premature decrepitude," when he received from Mgr. Taché a letter dated March 4, 1863, telling him that the Pope had, in May, 1862, named him Bishop, and that it was plainly the will of God that he should accept, and bow his *tête altière*. Father Faraud seems to have been equally indignant and surprised. He thought such an appointment most unjust to the Northern missions. Mgr. Taché persuaded him to consult the saintly Bishop of Montreal, Mgr. Bourget, who strongly advised him to accept the appointment, and to do the best he could, even if only for a few years. "Everybody says that, for the present at all events, you are absolutely needed in those terribly trying missions." Father Faraud's own words were: "As I must be a Bishop, I will be a real one; I will not do things by halves."

He was consecrated at Tours by Archbishop Guibert on November 30, 1863, and he took for motto the words of St Martin of Tours, *Non recuso laborem*. He sailed from Europe in 1865, bringing some resources for his poverty-stricken Vicariate, accompanied by Fathers Génin, Tissier, and Leduc, and Brothers Lalican, Hand, and Mooney, and carrying secretly in his portmanteau the Bulls appointing his assistant Bishop. Certainly he was not doing things by halves: it was never his way.

In July, 1865, exactly twenty years after the visit of that devoted priest, Abbé Thibault, to La Loche Portage, "in God's own good time," the new Bishop for the Far North reached that same portage, the southern boundary of his Vicariate. Very eloquent and touching are the words in which Mgr. Taché, concluding his *Vingt Années de Missions*, addresses his beloved friend and fellow-labourer, whom he pictures at that Height of Land saying farewell to the diocese of St Boniface, in which he had so long laboured, and having before him on the other side, not only a promised land, but a land actually given to him as the portion of his inheritance, and of his chalice, a field of toil very fitting for one borrowing his motto from St Martin of Tours, and pledged to preach the Gospel to the poor.

For four years, in spite of his infirmities, Mgr. Faraud journeyed over the snow-fields and the waters of his Vicariate.



MGR. FARAUD, FIRST VICAR APOSTOLIC OF
ATHABASKA-MACKENZIE

On the Peace River, he went as far as Fort St John, in the present Peace River Block, at the foot of the Rocky Mountains. On the Mackenzie, at Fort Providence, he with his own hands made the furniture for the poor convent which had been built for the Grey Nuns by Mgr. Grandin, Father Grouard, and Brother Alexis. He went in person to meet those Sisters of Charity at Lac La Biche, and from there to conduct them, with unavoidable hardship to them and to himself, past the rapids, and across the lakes, until they reached their humble home of the Sacred Heart Hospital. Bishop Faraud remained there—at Fort Providence—for two years, in order to help those pioneer nuns, and to feed the orphans under their care.

In 1869, he left the voyaging to his very capable assistant Bishop, Mgr. Clut. He himself settled down at the Mission of Lac La Biche, so often named. That post, in the middle east of the modern Alberta, and to the north of the Height of Land, was the door into the Far North. Bishop Faraud remained there in order that he might keep it as an open door for the needed supplies to the missions of his Vicariate. From that post of our Lady of Victories, the Bishop, suffering and resigned, carried on for twenty years the government of his struggling missions, by his letters, his manual labours, and his organization and forwarding of supplies. Foresight and economy were his watchwords. He may never have heard of Micawber, but he took his stand (most successfully, however) upon the same solid principle that for success and happiness outgoings ought to be sixpence less than the year's income. But he was no mere careful business man. When, after his death, Archbishop Taché eulogized the organization of the Northern Vicariate, he had spirituals in view as well as temporals. Even in sending help to his poor priests, in money or in kind, Mgr. Faraud preached to them the doctrines of perfection. Of himself he wrote: "Nature cries out, 'Enough; lay down your burden'; but grace says, 'The measure of love is to love without measure.'"

Mgr. Faraud had in abundance certain qualities of the good Superior. He knew how to rebuke in private, if there were need. But before outsiders all his geese were swans. And in sending box or bale to someone in the distant North, where extraordinary sacrifices were always in the order of the day, he would place amid the absolute necessities of life some little article, such as a parcel of sugar to be used on feast days, which brought home to the recipient the thoughtful and truly "maternal" kindness of the Bishop.

Mgr. Faraud devoted special care and affection to the training of the lay Brothers. The elders among them still bear his mark. They are as earnest and devoted at their prayers, as they are industrious and skilful at their work. The greatest trial of his life was the murder of Brother Alexis by an oarsman, an Iroquois half-breed, with whom the Brother was making on foot the journey of 130 miles from Fort MacMurray to Lake La Biche in July, 1875.

At his station of Lac La Biche, Bishop Faraud tended the bodies and souls of his Indian flock. He had some simple remedies for the various ailments which were brought before him. And his catechizing and preaching in several languages went on all the year round. His way of preaching, with much vigour and gesticulation, was just what pleased the Indians. The Bishop, during his years at La Biche, sometimes entertained—at least, by his lively and very matter-of-fact conversation—certain “Palefaces,” traders or tourists, passing through from the Red River, or England, or France. He left his north-western home only three times—in 1872 on a begging expedition, in 1879 on a canonical visitation of his Vicariate, and in 1889 to take part in the first Provincial Council of St Boniface, from which he never returned.

All foreign missions suffered by the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. In the autumn of 1872, Bishop Faraud, trying to forget his sciatica, set out for France, telling his missionaries to be very careful of every article of clothing, as he feared the time was not far off when they would all be thankful to have a piece of deer-skin to wear. He asked their prayers, for he never felt so unwilling to take the beggar's wallet on his shoulders: he found it a very heavy cross. He spent 1873 and 1874 in France, partly on a bed of suffering and partly in the pulpits of large towns, especially in Northern France, preaching charity sermons for Athabaska-Mackenzie. He visited Autun, also, where some Irish scholastics admired very much the good Bishop's homely and jovial *bonhomie*, but were amused to hear him say, “Av coorse, man,” by way of emphasizing some point. It was evident that he had found more opportunity of talking English with a certain Irish lay Brother than with anyone else. The devoted “questing” Bishop was back again at Lake La Biche in the spring of 1875, satisfied beyond all expectation with the generosity of his fellow-countrymen.

In 1879 Mgr. Faraud visited even the Good Hope Mission near the Arctic Circle. But on his way back his sufferings were great. At Fort Simpson (on the Mackenzie) he had to

be carried to and from the canoe, and so at every stop during the rest of the southward journey to Fort Providence, where he spent the winter. In the summer of 1880, he continued his journey to La Biche, and was near being starved to death on his way. The swollen waters of the Athabaska delayed the boat so much that the provisions were nearly exhausted by the time the travellers had reached only the House River junction. A half-breed, who knew his way well through the woods, was thence sent forward by land to get help from Father Grouard at Lake La Biche. It was only a four days' journey. But the messenger and hunter, having killed a bear on his way, enjoyed himself, and saw Father Grouard only on the eleventh day. A canoe, with provisions, was at once sent forward. Meanwhile, the Bishop, Brother Boisramé, and a little Indian boy, continuing to struggle against the stream, had met some Crees, who gave them a small quantity of dried meat. This in its turn was all gone, and there was no sign of a rescuer. The voyagers, quite exhausted, could only lie down to rest upon the bank, where for three days they had nothing to eat except buds from small branches within their reach. At last help reached them, but the canoe might have passed them by, if the oarsmen had not noticed a little smoke in the grass. The Indian boy had lighted a fire, over which he was boiling his moccasins in order to eat them.

By the year 1889 Lake La Biche had lost its importance as the half-way house and open door to the North. Railways had been made, and little towns were springing up in all directions. As one example of changed circumstances, it may be mentioned that Bishop Grandin had installed twelve nuns (Faithful Companions of Jesus) in the new town called by the Scottish name of Calgary in his diocese. In 1889, Mgr. Taché presided over the first Provincial Council of St Boniface, an ecclesiastical province which then included all the parishes or missions between the Lake of the Woods (Ontario) and the Pacific, and between the United States border and the North Pole. Mgr. Faraud was one of the six Oblate Bishops forming the council. He was very happy to enjoy the society of his old friend of Ile à la Crosse, but the friend of 1848 found his friend so changed, so worn, and feeble, and bent, needing the arm of Brother Boisramé, that he advised him—when the council was over—not to go back to his mission, but to resign. So it was done, though the old war-horse would have preferred to die with all his harness on his back. He settled down

at St Boniface, still continuing there in 1889-90 his work as transport agent for the northern Missions. He took a house, which he intended to benefit other invalidated missionaries from the North. He built an oratory, for which—as well as for all the house—he himself made the furniture. During an ordination which he held in the College of St Boniface on June 13, 1890, he began to feel extremely unwell. Three months later, he was no longer able to say Mass, or to attend to his usual religious exercises in his oratory. He then, every morning, heard Mass and received Holy Communion. He was attended devotedly by his confessor (M. le Curé Messier), and Father Pascal, and some of the Grey Nuns from the neighbouring hospital, and, above all, by Brother Boisramé. After an illness very patiently and cheerfully borne, Bishop Faraud closed his laborious and fruitful career on September 26, 1890. Archbishop Ireland, that old friend of the Oblate missionaries, was present with Archbishop Taché at his Requiem.

Another Bishop connected with Ile à la Crosse was Mgr. Grandin, the first Bishop of St Albert (now subdivided). He was not one of the trio who sang in chorus, *Vive le Nord, et ses heureux habitants!* But he lived himself for long periods in that poor mission, “rich in faith,” where his immediate predecessors had so cheerfully borne the burden and the great cold of the night and of the day.

Vital Justin Grandin (1829-1902), a native of the diocese of Le Mans (as before its division in 1855), was consecrated to our Blessed Lady even before his birth. His early piety brought him under the notice of Bishop Bouvier (Cenomanensis), the theologian. After studies in the Lesser Seminary at Précigné, he was in the Paris Seminary for Foreign Missions in 1850-51, where he was deeply interested to be told one day by a fellow-seminarist that he was leaving for the noviciate of the Oblate missionaries, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. This was the young student who afterwards became very well known as Father Fouquet, one of the very successful evangelizers of British Columbia. Young Grandin was much pleased with all the words that he heard: “Mary Immaculate,” “missionary,” and “Oblate”—i.e., one devoted, or offered up, to a service. It soon came to pass also that the Superiors in the Paris Seminary decided that young Grandin’s persistent lisp would make it impossible for him ever to learn Chinese. Besides, he was very delicate in health. So he said good-bye to his fellow-students, including two future martyrs,



MGR. GRANDIN, FIRST BISHOP OF ST. ALBERT

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and venerable servants of God, Théophile Vénard and Chapdelaine.

Brother Grandin was a novice at Notre Dame de l'Osier (Isère Department) when the newly consecrated Bishop Taché called there in 1852. He wrote on that occasion to his family: "If I go to Mgr. Taché's mission, I assure you I shall have no reason to regret China or Tonkin." He was ordained priest by the Founder of the Oblates in 1854, and in August of the same year he was at St Boniface, although the doctor had declared that in his wretchedly weak health he was not fit for an ocean voyage. In June, 1855, he was sent farther west and north, to assist Father Faraud at the Nativity Mission, Lake Athabaska. From that mission, he went up to spend some months at Salt River, as the guest of old Beaulieu, who taught him Montagnais. He spent also some time at the Seven Dolours Mission, Fond du Lac, at the eastern end of Lake Athabaska. In 1857, he was placed in charge of the mission at Ile à la Crosse. The negotiations for his appointment as coadjutor Bishop were going forward without his knowledge. In July, 1858, he heard suddenly from Mgr. Taché and the Founder that the Bulls for his consecration had been issued in December, 1857. His protests and misgivings and fears were overruled. There was, however, a circumstance which made it impossible for him to obey quickly. An Indian visionary at Ile à la Crosse gave himself out as the Son of God. Many of the tribesmen believed in him, and by his desire burnt their furs, and their best garments, and killed their dogs. It took Father Grandin much time and patience to enlighten and convert the poor creatures.

Mgr. Taché wrote to Father Grandin in 1859: "You must make haste. It will soon be two years since you were named. The Pope thinks you are an old Bishop by this time, and if he were to write to you now, he would call you his Venerable Brother." At Marsilles on November 30, 1859, Mgr. de Mazenod wrote in his diary: "This has been one of the happiest days of my life. I have consecrated our pious Father Grandin, who had received all the previous orders also at my hands. He had made a noviciate by five years of superhuman labour in the frozen North." On April 17, 1860, the Founder wrote to Bishop Taché: "Oh, this excellent Mgr. Grandin! What a perfect missionary! He is esteemed and revered wherever he goes. All his thought is for the glory of God, the salvation of souls, and the prospects of his far-off missions." During that same visit of Father Grandin to Marseilles, Mgr. de Mazenod wrote

in pitying strain: "I cannot give him bread enough: he has been for years without it."

Mgr. Grandin, after illness in France, reached the Red River in July, 1860, with some new priests and Brothers and nuns. There he was laid up again for three weeks. But he insisted on going forward, though he had to be carried to the boat. He reached Ile à la Crosse on October 4, 1860, with Father Séguin, Brother Boisramé, and three Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns), who founded the convent there. The journey from St Boniface had lasted sixty-seven days, with many a mishap and many a hardship.

It had been arranged between the two Bishops that the one should remain at St Boniface, the gate of the North-West, the other, the coadjutor, at Ile à la Crosse, then the gate of the Far North. But there was much planning needed for the religious interests of the various missions, and such planning had not been possible at St Boniface, on account of the very bad health of Bishop Grandin. Moreover, Bishop Taché, as already said, loved to cheer and console his sorely tried priests and people, and so he unexpectedly appeared at Ile à la Crosse on October 30, 1860. Bishop Grandin assured him that the hardships of his own journey had restored his health.

If Ile à la Crosse was specially dear to the trio who had there begun their missionary career together, perhaps it was still more dear to Bishop Grandin. We cannot well speak of any missionary Bishop's usual residence, but Mgr. Grandin was very often at that Mission of St John Baptist during the years 1860-69. He improved and embellished the mission spiritually and temporally, and—keenest appeal of all to his heart—he saw it reduced to ashes. In two hours of a piercingly cold night, March 1, 1867, the mission-house, the convent, the orphanage, the stores, and their contents, were all burned to the ground, under the eyes of Bishop, nuns, and orphans, half-clad and standing in their bare feet in the snow. "Nothing left, absolutely nothing; not even a handkerchief to dry my eyes," was what the afflicted Bishop wrote on the occasion. But the mission rose again from its ashes. After "many a sorrow, many a labour, many a tear," came the looked-for reward—i.e., blessings to God's people. In 1888, Bishop Grandin wrote: "Consider what has been done, under God's blessing, in connection with the one mission of Ile à la Crosse itself. A little over forty years ago, there were no Christians in this place. The first Oblates, in much sorrow and suffering and dearth of all things, scattered the seed of the Divine

Word. Now we have seen the harvest. There are 700 Christians here. At La Loche Portage, served from here, there are 200. At St Raphael's Mission, also served from here, there are 300. And I do not believe that in the most Catholic parishes of Europe the priests are more consoled by the religious lives of their flocks than we are here."

The fourth Provincial Council of Quebec in 1868 had considered the propriety of some new ecclesiastical arrangements in the North-West. In 1871, the ecclesiastical province of St Boniface was formed, Mgr. Grandin becoming the first Bishop of St Albert. As our present volume is chiefly concerned with Athabaska and Mackenzie, the Far North, we do not follow Bishop Grandin for the remaining years of his career. Only five of his forty-eight years on the mission were given to Athabaska-Mackenzie, two as a priest at Lake Athabaska, and three (June, 1861, to July, 1864), as a Bishop visiting the scattered missions before the appointment of their own Vicar Apostolic. The full Life of Mgr. Grandin has been written by Father Jonquet, O.M.I. Those who read it will learn, with increasing wonder and admiration, something of the piety, the great qualities, the incredible labours, and humiliations, and sufferings, of this pioneer of the North-West. They will not be surprised to be told that Louis Veuillot, having met Mgr. Grandin, said to an Oblate Father in Paris: "What a grand Bishop you have there in North America! He shows me the truth of the saying that ice burns." The readers of the Life will not be surprised to hear that Louis Veuillot devoted an article of *L'Univers* to Bishop Grandin, as a living example of the truth of the Catholic claim that the Church is *la grande faiseuse d'hommes*. Bishop Grandin was revered in his lifetime, and, since his death in 1902, so many have spoken of him as a saint, that the Holy See has been asked to judge if he ought to be publicly honoured and invoked as a model missionary, and model disciple of the Crucified.

CHAPTER XI

HARD LABOUR IN THE PURPLE

ST PAUL calls the episcopate a *Bonum Opus*. Some legendary Bishop is supposed to have said, "The Bonum is for the Bishop; the Opus for the Vicar General." If ever there was a Bishop who had the Opus, the *travaux forcés*, in great abundance for himself, and without anything of the Bonum, it was Bishop Clut, O.M.I.

Isidore Clut made his perpetual vows in the scholasticate at Marseilles, on the day of the definition of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1854. Three years later, he was ordained priest at St Boniface by Bishop Taché. In October, 1858, he reached the Nativity Mission (Fort Chippewyan), Lake Athabaska, to be assistant to Father Faraud, to learn Montagnais from him, but at the same time to leave him free to visit the distant missions or camps. Isolation, poor food, and usually not enough of that, were Father Clut's portion at Lake Athabaska for nine years, during one of which (1862) an affection of the lungs nearly ended his hardships. At that same place, on August 15, 1867, he was consecrated Bishop under most unusual circumstances.

When Mgr. Faraud was made Bishop, as already related, he explained to the Holy Father himself, in 1864, that whatever he might do as "Overseer," the Vicariate would need a Bishop able to travel a great deal, as he had done for many years whilst he was physically able. Bishop Faraud was afraid of meeting difficulties in Rome. But he said afterwards that it seemed as if the good angel of the Northern missions had whispered in the Pope's ear. Pius IX, so paternal and simple, though so religiously dignified, took the new Bishop's hands in his own, and said: "I know your works; I am greatly edified by all that I hear of your missionaries; I grant you all the faculties you have asked." As the Bishop, moved by the Pope's kindness, went on to tell the Holy Father some details of life in the North, His Holiness made little effort to conceal his emotion, and repeated again and again, "*Mirabilia quae fecit Dominus!*"



BISHOP CLUT, AUXILIARY FOR ATHABASKA-
MACKENZIE

Bishop Faraud brought back from Rome in blank (had such a thing ever happened before?) the Bulls, dated August 3, 1864, for the appointment and consecration of an auxiliary. The Bishop was to consult all the missionaries of his Vicariate, and then to fill in the name. A unanimous secret vote selected, as the Bishop had selected, Father Clut.

The Bishop elect heard at last of his fate on January 3, 1866, at Fort Providence, where eight Oblates were assembled, and he was told that his consecration was to take place in 1867 at Lake La Biche. One of the faculties granted to Mgr. Faraud dispensed with the presence of "co-consecrating Bishops." Still, he wished and hoped for the presence of the other two Bishops of the North-West. But when 1867 had advanced a little, Mgr. Taché and Mgr. Grandin were setting out for Europe, as we have already told. Bishop Faraud heard this news on his way south from Good Hope to meet the first Grey Nuns for the Mackenzie. At Lake Athabaska, he said to Father Clut: "We will wait no longer. You are three years a Bishop! Prepare for consecration. Call together a great number of the Indians. I expect to be back here, with the nuns, by the middle of July, at the latest." The middle of July came, but there was no sign of the caravan. The difficulties of that river voyage have been told, and told best of all by some of the Sisters themselves, in the volume, *The Grey Nuns in the Far North*. The end of July came, and Father Clut and the Indians still strained their eyes over the waters, but they saw no sign of anyone coming. Provisions had run short. The Indians were fasting, as only they can fast, but at length they began to disperse, and to look for something to eat in the woods. By August 10-11 the crowds had gone away in despair. In the early morning of Tuesday, August 13, 1867, the barge was at length seen with its flag flying, but there were on shore only five or six Indian families that had been able to fast so long, so as to welcome the Bishop and the nuns, and to be present at the great festival.

The Pontifical prescribes the choice of the feast of an Apostle or a Sunday for the consecration of a Bishop. But the month's delay upon the river had made all Father Clut's foresight unavailing. He had no means of feeding his guests until Sunday. Thursday, the feast of the Assumption, was therefore appointed for the consecration. Mgr. Clut wrote afterwards that, instead of spending the vigil in retreat, the whole day and a great part of the night, after settling with Bishop Faraud's oarsmen, had to be given up by him to preparations for the morrow. He consoled himself

with the thought that he had made a four days' retreat at the time he was expecting the Bishop's return.

For the consecration at Lake Athabaska, on Lady Day, there was not all the religious pomp of European cathedrals. It was thought that all the episcopal insignia had been brought from St Boniface. But on examination it was found that some were missing, including a crozier for the new Bishop. Mgr. Faraud found a young fir tree, cut it down, peeled it, and cleverly made it like enough to a shepherd's crook. Father Clut, before lying down in the night, gave it a coat of yellow clay, which was nearly dry in time for the solemn function. This improvised crozier was of much greater length, at least, than the one supposed to have been St Patrick's, the Bacal Jesu, or staff of Jesus, which was publicly burned in Dublin in the reign of Henry VIII. The shaft of Mgr. Clut's crozier serves now for the processional cross at the Nativity Mission. The crook, and the Roman Bulls drawn in blank, are preserved in the scholasticate at Edmonton, Alberta. For prelates in charge of the Bishop elect, Mgr. Clut had to be content with Fathers Eynard and Tissier. The only ecclesiastical dignitary assisting the consecrating prelate was Brother Salasse (*Frater conversus*). The newly-arrived nuns—a Godsend—having first done the sacristy work, were the choir for the actual function. The little chapel of the Nativity was only half full, owing to the hungry circumstances already mentioned.

Having been well and duly consecrated, and having banqueted with his guests on dried meat and dried fish, Bishop Clut's first duty was to expedite the departure of his consecrator, and the Grey Nuns, and their boatmen, for Great Slave Lake. All possible haste was made in the afternoon, the night, and the next day, and in the evening of August 16, 1867, the barge moved northwards, leaving Bishop Clut to his solitude, and the short commons to which his guests had reduced him.

In the spring of 1868, and again in the spring of 1869, Mgr. Clut visited on snow-shoes Fort Vermilion, on the Peace River, at a distance of 300 miles from Lake Athabaska. An urgent reason for his going there was the presence in the same place, among the Beaver (Castor) Indians, of a very zealous Protestant, afterwards well known as Bishop Bompas. In the second of these journeys, Mgr. Clut lost his way in the woods, along with his only companion, Louis Lafrance (the Iroquois half-breed, who afterwards murdered Brother Alexis). Mgr. Clut, on this occasion,

marched as fast as he could, from morning till night, every day for eleven days, over roads where no roads ever were, and whilst the snow came pitilessly down. His feet every night were swollen and painful, and could hardly bear the pressure of the thongs fastening the rackets. He looked upon his sufferings as a providential condition of the success of the mission which he was to give. And he thought it a further providence that his *mal de raquettes* did not become so bad as to prevent the completion of his journey, or the preaching of the mission. Many were his fervent prayers. "Suffering makes one fervent," he said.

Returning in 1869 to Lake Athabaska from the mission given at Fort Vermilion, Mgr. Clut learned of the summoning of the Vatican Council, and received orders from Mgr. Faraud to attend the council, and to try to find some young missionaries in France. Mgr. Clut was in Rome, therefore, in December, 1869. Some Bishops who were his seniors by consecration were surprised to find him placed before them, but the date of his nomination explained matters. He remained in Rome only a few weeks after the opening of the council, because it was important that he should be able to overtake the north-bound barges of 1870. Before leaving Europe, Bishop Clut visited the Oblate scholasticate at Autun, where the amiable and pious Mgr. Bouange, V.G. (afterwards Bishop of St Flour) was present, along with the community, when the missionary Bishop gave what is called in Ireland "the least taste in life" of pemmican, and also solved, *ambulando*, questions as to the use of snow-shoes. Someone, perhaps Mgr. Bouange, mentioning Notre Dame de l'Osier, the missionary Bishop said it was "*le berceau de sa vie religieuse*." The Bishop of Autun, Mgr. de Marguerye, was no doubt still in Rome at the date here recalled. It may not be wandering too far to say that in 1870 another Oblate Bishop visited Autun—viz., Mgr. D'Herbomez, the first Vicar Apostolic of British Columbia. He came when the Franco-Prussian War had brought the council to a close, but before the débâcle.

Mgr. Clut's visit to the scholasticate secured for the Far North the services of Father Collignon, a youthful, cheerful, broad-shouldered, "muscular Christian," and a good Religious. Mgr. Clut visited, too, some French seminaries, and he was accompanied to Canada by six companions, one of whom was afterwards Bishop Pascal of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Not in 1870, but on a later occasion, Mgr. Clut found another youthful recruit, who is now Bishop Breynat of Mackenzie.

In 1870, when Mgr. Clut reached Lake La Biche, he was a true auxiliary to Bishop Faraud in saving some oats and hay, which a kind Providence had allowed to reach maturity. In due course, he went on towards the North, accompanied by two of those who had come with him from France, and were now Fathers Lecorre and Roure, and by three postulant lay Brothers, a postulant (Mary Margaret) for the Grey Nuns at Fort Providence (which she was destined never to reach), and a little orphan girl, her companion. When the party (having safely negotiated several rapids) had reached a very difficult stage of their journey, the Grand Rapids of the Athabaska River, their half-breed boatmen organized a strike. Reasoning and entreaties were lost upon them. They went back on foot through the woods, to get paid, they said, by Mgr. Faraud at La Biche. What a position for poor Bishop Clut! To attempt to go down the next chain of rapids, without a guide, would have meant risking not only the loss of the much-needed provisions which he was bringing to the Northern missions, but risking the lives of all the passengers. It was September 7, 1870, and the snow had already begun to fall. Mgr. Clut, describing his sadness afterwards, wrote that under God his confidence was in Mr. MacMurray, of Fort MacMurray, the chief official of the Athabaska district. As readers interested in travels naturally keep a map before them, it may be well to say that on our modern maps the little town of MacMurray appears in the north-east of Alberta, to the east of the Thickwood Hills, and at the junction of the Clearwater River with the great Athabaska. This rising town has now within reach a sort of a railway, which connects it more or less with Edmonton, by way of Lac La Biche.

From the Grand Rapids, where the Bishop and his companions were stranded, it was a five days' journey by land to MacMurray. But Mgr. Clut, counting on the kindness and generosity of Mr. MacMurray, made ready for the trip. First of all, the mission barge was hauled ashore. One of the Brothers and one faithful serving-man were to be left in charge. The poor tertiary and postulant lay Sister was seriously ill, and had to be left on the bank in a tent, with her little companion. The Bishop was afraid she might die, and so he told Father Roure to stay, and do all he could for her, spiritually and temporally. The Bishop, Father Lecorre, and two Brothers, each one taking his blankets and food for five days, set out on foot, following the course of the Athabaska River. Sometimes on sharp stones,

sometimes in mire up to the knees, through thickets which tore their clothes, over the rocks, scaling the cliffs, "steady and strong" on the very edge of a precipice, so they trudged and clambered during a whole day. As the sun was going down, the travellers began to think of camping for the night, to rest their weary and bleeding feet. Suddenly, beyond the river they saw a smoke-wreath. Father Lecorre fired a shot as a signal, which was answered from the camp, a Montagnais camp. Very soon a canoe came across. The Great Chief of Prayer, and his companions in the wilderness, had come upon seven Christian families, who were delighted to receive them. With this providential relief it was easy to get to Fort MacMurray by canoe.

Unfortunately, Mr. MacMurray was not at that post when the Bishop arrived. He was said to be on his way back from the La Loche, or Methy, Portage. After waiting three days, Mgr. Clut thought it better to take a canoe, and go up the Clearwater River to meet him. For four days and a half, from morning till eve, the Bishop rowed "like a galley-slave" against the current, and so reached the Great Portage. He then walked the twelve miles of the land route, and found the "brigade" of the Company's boats. Mr. MacMurray, however, was not yet there, but his representative showed himself equally obliging. He promised the Bishop a barge with its crew to go to Grand Rapids. This was one good instance of the many services rendered by the great trading Company to the Catholic missionaries. The Bishop, reflecting that he was 350 miles away from his abandoned fellow-travellers at Great Rapids, then made his way to his canoe, and rowed himself back—feverish, and shivering, and suffering much from a malignant tumour—to MacMurray, which he reached on September 24, 1870. The next day the promised barge arrived, but there was no "smooth sailing" even yet. The most important member of the crew, the guide—i.e., the man who knew the ropes, or at least the rapids—was spitting blood. Another man had got hurt on the way, and the rest said the voyage would be too hard, as the river was too shallow. The Bishop in vain pleaded the cause of the devoted missionaries, and the nuns, and the orphans, all expecting their provisions for the winter; spoke in vain of the missionaries and nuns who had come from so far, and endured so much, to bring the Gospel amongst them, and to do them good. After five or six hours of palaver and bargaining, and a promise of more money, and the hiring of five Montagnais Indians and two Crees, to make the job easier, the crew of the barge

agreed to go on board, and to move on. The Bishop's relieved feelings found vent in a flood of tears.

On October 1, 1870, the barge was at the foot of the Grand Rapids. The next move was to walk to the place where the Bishop had left some of his travelling companions more than three weeks before. There was joy on both sides, after so much sorrow and almost despair. Father Roure was very pale and worn, and woebegone. The Bishop asked if he had had enough to eat, but he said only that he had taken a chill when getting up in the night to look after the poor postulant nun, who had become delirious. The Bishop went to her tent, which she had never left. She was very ill. What was to be done for her, and how could she endure the journey into the North, and the winter cold, which was already beginning?

But there was no time to be lost. The men saw that the work before them, though very trying, was not beyond their power, and all set to it with good will, Mgr. Clut himself working, as usual, like a horse. The separate parcels, bags, or boxes, or bales, had to be carried from the barge overland past the rapids. Then the barge itself had to be carried over the same rocky and slippery ground. Then a day had to be given to repairing the damage done to the barge, and refitting it.

There was great pity for the aspiring, and almost expiring, nun. She had to be carried on a stretcher the whole length of the portage. The rapids and cascades are very numerous in that season of low water in the river. Many a time the boat struck against shingle or sand, just above or below the surface. The shouting and struggling of the boatmen on such occasions would try the nerves of even the strongest man. The patient woman, hardly able to raise her head, bore all very well. Three times she had to be lifted out of the boat, and carried for some distance. In all her sufferings, she never complained. She only said, "I am sorry to give so much trouble." On October 5, the boat reached Mac-Murray, and on October 9, the Nativity Mission, Lake Athabaska. Poor Mary Margaret was left there, where she died very soon a resigned and holy death. When Mgr. Clut reached Great Slave Lake, he thought that young Father Roure was dying, too, and he gave him in charge to Father Gascon at Fort Resolution, whilst he continued his own journey to Fort Providence. But Father Roure did not die, though his family got a message, which left them no hope of his recovery. The only thing that might be said against him was that he did not keep his hair on. Two months

after the Bishop landed him at Fort Resolution, he lost all his hair, but not his head, nor his health, nor his good resolution. After half a century of priestly labour amid snow and ice, he was living and laughing, in 1921, at the northerly post of Fort Providence.

In 1871, our "hard labour" Bishop, Mgr. Clut, came south to Lake La Biche to seek the needed yearly supplies for the North. Mgr. Faraud, anxious to avoid the dangerous rapids of the Athabaska, was busy on his cart-road from La Biche to Fort MacMurray. He had begun it in 1869. But what a task to attempt! The distance was 140 miles, through primeval forests, quagmires, marshes, and rivers. The means at hand were very few men, some lean oxen, and very primitive tools. Still the work was begun, and that it was begun by such a courageous traveller as Mgr. Faraud ought to give us some notion of the difficulty of bringing boats down or past the rapids of the Athabaska. In 1871, Mgr. Faraud was in mid-forest, working away with some help, when his auxiliary Bishop came from the North to find him. The plan for the road was known, and about 70 miles of it had been made at this date. Mgr. Clut, who travelled from Lake Athabaska with Father Eynard and a half-breed Iroquois hired man, described, in a letter to Mgr. Taché, how and where he found the Vicar Apostolic.

"When we came to the place where the House River joins the Athabaska, we landed. I knew that the road was to pass there. But we found no road, and no sign of a human being. We then rowed for some distance up the House River, but it appeared to be rapids, rapids, all the way, a real chain of them. So we cached our canoe, took our blankets and provisions on our backs, and set out on foot to seek the road-makers. For two days we marched through the woods, where there was yet no clearing. We never saw a living creature until we met a she-bear, evidently in no mood to be robbed of her whelps, which were by her side. Just here began an immense *brûlé*, the remains of a great forest fire. The calcined and fallen trees lying heaped upon each other in all directions, the splintered branches, the crushed underwood, seemed to forbid advance. Leaving Father Eynard in charge of our packs, the Iroquois and I made our way as best we could. But all our exploring was fruitless. Only our own voices broke the death-like silence. I stood in thought, and said to myself that Mgr. Faraud must have worked in some other direction. If we were to go on farther, we might miss him, lose our way, and die of hunger. I decided to go back to the canoe, and to

return north to Lake Athabaska. We retraced our steps, but before we had gone far a shot was fired in the distance. Rejoicing, we went in search of very welcome neighbours. They were some half-breeds, who were bringing food to the road-makers, but did not know where to find them. All together we trudged along for another whole day, and at nine o'clock that evening, June 5, 1871, we came upon Mgr. Faraud, Fathers Collignon and Ladet, and Brother Alexis, all wielding their hatchets very vigorously. They were not in clerical garb, and I myself did not look very like one of the Fathers of the Vatican Council, or a Prince of the Church. I had no soutane, and such garments as I wore had paid many tributes to thorn-branches during my three days in the woods. Hearing from us all the description of the thick woods, and the maskegs, through which we had passed, Mgr. Faraud, though with great regret, gave up the idea of continuing his cart-road. We all journeyed to Lake La Biche together."

In justice to ecclesiastical road-makers and bridge-builders, it must be recorded that in September, 1856, Father Maisonneuve surprised the people of Fort Pitt (in the south-east) by driving to that place all the way from La Biche over a road made by the Oblate Fathers through the forest. "This was the first road in the whole North," says Father Morice. The great Albertan pioneer, Father Lacombe, had several bridges to his credit, as we find in various pages of his Life (*The Blackrobe Voyageur*) by Miss Katherine Hughes. It was he who first proved that Red River carts could cross the prairies between Edmonton and the Red River. Of late times also—in or before 1902—Father Desmarais made a road between Lesser Slave Lake and Sturgeon Lake, in Alberta.

In 1872, the devoted journeyman Bishop, Mgr. Clut, when in the Far North, was invited to Fort Yukon by M. Mercier, a Catholic Canadian, who was in charge of that post as the representative of a San Francisco trading company. There were no priests then in Alaska (now a Vicariate, S.J.), and M. Mercier considered that Bishop Clut would be able to convert many of the Indians. It would have taken a year, or perhaps two years, to exchange letters with Mgr. Faraud, so the auxiliary Bishop, taking with him Father Lecorre as the intended missionary of that far-off territory, and "nothing daunted by the failures of Fathers Séguin (1862) and Petitot (1870)," left Fort Providence on August 30, 1872. He could not find room on the Company's boat, and the Protestant minister (already



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named), Mr. Bompas, was travelling on it down the Mackenzie. The two Catholic missionaries borrowed a canoe, in which they were able to reach Point Separation, at the head of the delta of the Mackenzie. From there they walked, carrying their canoe or currach, across the Rocky Mountains, over boggy ground, a portage of about 70 miles. In the windings of the hills there were numerous torrents and rivers which had to be forded. Some of them were quite deep, and some were bringing down glaciers from the mountains.

When the two shepherds in search of sheep reached the Porcupine River—a picturesque, but dangerous, tributary of the Yukon—they launched their canoe. But the winter was coming earlier than they expected. The north wind blew without ceasing. After a few days on the river, the canoe had to contend with sheets and blocks of ice. On September 30, 1872, the solid ice was an impossible barrier. Father Lecorre, who had been ailing all the time of the land journey, could hardly walk. The travellers were about half-way between the Rockies and Fort Yukon. They had no sled. They had very little food left. And there was seemingly no chance of meeting any human being. Divine Providence came to their assistance. Before the close of the day, they fell in with an Indian family of the Loucheux tribe, who were in the same position as themselves, but better provided. They were on their way to Fort Yukon, but had been stopped by the freezing of the river. They were able to give some provisions to the missionaries, as well as the use of a sled and one dog. All set out together on October 6, on a journey that was to last a week. During all that week, Mgr. Clut moved on in front with a hatchet, clearing the way for the sleds, falling here and there among sharp ice blocks, breaking through the thin ice, and sinking in many a frozen pond. Father Lecorre, recovering slowly, followed after the sleds, alternately falling and picking himself up again as best he could.

Fort Yukon was reached in the evening of October 13, and the winter was spent under the hospitable roof of the Catholic M. Mercier. It was not a happy season for the two missionaries. Protestant ministers had been before them, and they had told the natives (so the natives said) that the Catholic priests had put Jesus Christ to death, and that this was their reason for wearing a crucifix.

When the ice broke up in the spring of 1873, the two missionaries set out for St Michael's, going down the River Yukon (which runs into the Behring Sea). At Newklukayet,

on May 23, they saw 130 Tananas arrive, with many chants and dances. They were clad in leather garments, bedecked with beads and porcupine quills. But they were dirty, and the least civilized of all the Indians Bishop Clut had ever seen. A Protestant minister had been amongst them, but the Bishop's visit was not fruitless. Either in that particular place, or elsewhere in Alaska during that journey, 150 children were baptized. The Indians of Alaska remembered seeing some Russian "Orthodox" priests, and they had a certain liking for the Catholic religion. On June 4, Mgr. Clut went on to St Michael's, on the coast, where he met with a great disappointment. A year earlier, he had written to Mgr. Faraud, asking him to send some Oblates and supplies to St Michael's by way of San Francisco. It came to light later on that the letter never reached Mgr. Faraud at all. The two missionaries left St Michael's on July 7, going up the Yukon as far as Anvik and Nulatto. Father Lecorre remained alone in Alaska, expecting that another Oblate and supplies would be sent to his relief in 1874. Mgr. Clut went back upon all his previous stages, and returned to Fort Providence, which he reached on October 10, 1873, having passed through the Good Hope Mission on September 6. At Good Hope, on January 30, 1873, a letter had been received from a business firm (Hutchinson, Kohl and Co.), in reply to a communication dated June, 1870.

Mgr. Clut intended to form some mission-stations on the Yukon River, but Mgr. Faraud discovered that the Bishop of Vancouver Island was ecclesiastically responsible for Alaska, so, of course, Father Lecorre was recalled in 1874. He returned to the Canadian North-West via San Francisco. Like Mgr. Clut, he always counted himself happy to have brought Christianity to some souls on the frozen lands and waters of Alaska.

The Alaskan expedition of Mgr. Clut may serve to give some idea of the life of "hard labour" to which that zealous prelate willingly, for Christ's sake, sentenced himself for thirty years. Except for two very short visits to Canada and Europe, the episcopal career of the auxiliary for Athabaska-Mackenzie was spent in visiting the widely-scattered missions from Lake La Biche to Fort MacPherson (Arctic Red River), near the delta of the Mackenzie, and from Fond du Lac (east of Lake Athabaska) to the Rocky Mountains. It took him four or five years to make a visitation of all the missions. His knowledge of the northern rivers and lakes was certainly extensive and peculiar. He

was at home on the Athabaska, the Peace River, the Liard, the Mackenzie, and their tributaries. There was hardly a sheltering bay of the great lakes which would not remind him how his boat was driven in there, to take refuge from a violent tempest on one of those inland seas. There was never a rapid which did not remind him of injury or loss, or marvellous escape. Every rough riverside told him where he had been the trackman, pulling a boat along in places where the stoutest oarsmen could make no head against the stream. In Europe our canal horses, well shod, as they pull their load, follow a well-beaten path. The missionary in like case, and contending with a very strong current, makes his way in moccasins over rocks and heaps of stones, and over marshy ground or shifting sands, in which only his trackman's rope keeps him from sinking too deeply. Many a time, too, such a trackman tumbles into the water at some treacherous edge, saved once more by his rope, if he has not fallen from too great a height.

Did good Bishop Clut, at the end of such a journey, always find, or bring to others, a little comfort and rest? Alas! he often arrived at a mission to find that he had come in one of the "hunger moons." In the faces of those who would have liked to welcome him, he read, before they told him, that even the rationed dried fish had given out. In letters written when food was plentiful they had begged the beloved pastor to visit them, and now in this winter season he was with them as a *bouche inutile* and worse. The poor Bishop ever was quick to understand; and he retraced his painful steps, though he might find a river frozen, and might suffer many things before reaching a mission where they had enough of anything to eat.

Mgr. Clut left after him a diary, 1,000 pages, out of which, nevertheless, he declares he has omitted many things. May those faded pages one day see the light, to make all readers thank God and take courage that such a servant of Christ, of the Church, and of the Red Indian race, was found, who went on labouring and suffering, in the firm conviction that for this very purpose he had been sent into the world.

For ourselves, in this place, it remains to say something more of this Bishop's winter journeys. If he was an unrivalled oarsman and trackman, he was no less famous as trainer and driver of dogs. The dogs were so much afraid of his whip that he made them go without the actual use of it. His voice, and the crack of the whip over their ears, sufficed to send them galloping over the snow. But he took great care of his animals, and fed them as well as he

could. If he had not been so poor, his dogs and sled would easily have taken away the first prize from all the guides and traders in the North.

Bishop Clut made about half a dozen trips by land from Fort Providence on the Mackenzie to Fort Rae on the north arm of Great Slave Lake, in order not to leave Father Roure two years without confession. On one of these trips, he started with four very old dogs, on their last legs. One of the four deserted in the first night out. As the way was new to the Bishop, he had two men for guides. Big-head, the Indian, went in front, beating down the snow before the dogs. Boucher, the half-breed, came next, with dogs and a sled. For seven days, the Bishop, on his snow-shoes, pushed another sled from behind with a heavy stick, resting one end of it on an empty stomach, and the other on the back of the sled. This is a missionary's ordinary way of travelling in the North. Mgr. Clut described it thus:

"My three dogs were not drawing me, but I was helping them to draw the sleigh. Even so, I generally arrived at the appointed camping-place two or three hours after the others. I could not get the dogs to go, whatever I did. I sometimes changed their places, or left one free from pulling for a while. It was of no use, but risked my getting frost-bitten. In fact, my fingers became numb, and the skin peeled off. Even the snow-shoes do not prevent sinking in the snow, and while the violent exercise made me perspire heavily, my outer garments were soon frozen and stiff. Every evening after supper I had to spend a long time drying my clothes at our camp fire. But whilst I was roasted on one side, I was frozen on the other, so that, do what I would, I had to lie down to rest in an inner garment which felt like a coat of ice. There were from 40 to 43 degrees (centigrade) of frost. During the six nights in the open air, upon this journey, I hardly slept a wink. Yet each new day I had to go on as before, and if I did not exert myself to overtake my companions, I might have lost my life in the forest. And the only food all this time was dried meat.

"On December 21 we reached a place where there were trails in many directions. As my dogs were the slowest, I was always far behind, and here I felt very doubtful about the track to follow. After a little while, my leading dog got caught in a snare such as one sets to catch a lynx. I concluded I must have gone upon a wrong trail for the last mile or two. I hurried back, leaving the dogs resting. After a further examination, I came to them again, and



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urged them on as well as I could, still fearing I might be losing my way in the forest, while the night was fast approaching. But I kept hoping to overtake someone who had gone before me on that trail. At last, late at night I saw a fire, and coming close I found, not an Indian camp, but my man Boucher, who coolly apologized for setting the snare, saying that he only wanted to play a trick on the dog.

“Late in the evening of December 23, after a cup of tea, the party set off for Great Slave Lake with all haste that might be. I charged the men to wait for me at the lake, as I did not know how to cross to Fort Rae. When I reached the lake it was night, and I found no one waiting. I had to trust to the dogs’ instinct, and let them go on, though they were quite worn out. I could only keep repeating the prayer to my guardian angel as we advanced a little in the dark. About half way across, the leader suddenly stopped short. I was greatly afraid of being lost on the frozen lake, where the cold was far keener than in the woods. I was perspiring as usual, and might easily have been frozen to death if lost on the lake. When the dogs stopped, I went to the front, and walked on a little. They followed me. Then the leader took a sudden turn to the left, nosed the snow, and set off in a new direction. The sagacious animal’s instinct saved me. In a short time I saw a light, I heard dogs barking, and very soon good little Father Roure was kneeling in the snow asking my blessing. I gave him also the accolade, in spite of the many icicles in my beard.”

On St Stephen’s Day, Mgr. Clut was again on Great Slave Lake, this time crossing it at its broadest in order to visit another lonely missionary, Father Gascon, at Fort Resolution. He expected to arrive on December 30 or 31. At ten o’clock in the evening of December 31, he and his company had to camp out on a little island, exposed to all the winds of heaven. It was terribly cold, and the Bishop could get no sleep. At half-past eleven, he roused all hands, the fire was made up, and at midnight, with mutual good wishes for a happy New Year, the company feasted on some caribou tongues, a few biscuits, and some coffee which the Bishop had saved for this New Year’s Day. At two o’clock in the morning, nine hours before sunrise, the party moved on, so as to complete the journey to Fort Resolution.

Such nights, *à la belle étoile* as have been mentioned are not the most trying experiences of the missionary in the Arctic regions. Mgr. Clut and other missionaries were sometimes caught upon a frozen lake in a blizzard and

blinding snow-storm, when their only shelter was between their upturned sled and the dogs which lay by their side.

We have been telling of some extraordinary experiences. The ordinary camping-out of a missionary traveller has its own comfort, and even its poetry—at a certain distance. The rule of the road is to be always near a wood towards evening. Whilst the priest or Bishop, making a shovel of his racket, scoops out in the deep snow a pit of ten or twenty square feet, the other members of the party cut down some firs. The green branches furnish one half the pit; the trunks serve to make a blazing fire in the other half. Very pleasant are the resin fireworks, and explosions, from such green-wood trees. When the fire is well alight, the dogs' portion of fish is thawed out and the dogs are fed. Then comes the men's turn, who feast also on fish, or meat already cooked, or pemmican. A kettle, filled with snow, is hung over the fire, and in two minutes a sufficient allowance of tea is thrown into the boiling water. Tea is not only the tonic, comforting and cheering, it is the ambrosia, of all northern travellers. Everything else may fail, but tea is the treasure which must never be forgotten. Various matters, not exhilarating, may indeed be found floating in the teapot, especially when the hares have been in the snow. But does not boiling make all substances harmless and safe?

At supper the guests are seated on the green boughs outspread, unless they prefer to keep turning about, close to the fire, as if on a spit, alternately roasted and frozen. Woe to the inexperienced traveller who lifts steel to his lips in frosty weather! Supper safely got through, very likely the pipe will be produced—always now a calumet of peace. There will be stories of the day's adventures, even laughter at the accidents and hardships. Night prayers, perhaps in an Indian tongue, will be the last words spoken under the twinkling stars, which may seem angels' eyes looking down from the summit of Jacob's ladder, while the shining and dancing northern lights may be taken for angels' steps and angels' wings. "Into thy hands, O Lord," say the weary travellers, when they try to compose themselves to sleep. If they have been able to bring one large waterproof canvas, they spread it for common use on the fir branches. With feet towards the fire they lay themselves down to rest, if not to sleep, the nearness of a companion being a great advantage, and even a dog being a very welcome companion. Each traveller wraps himself up in his blanket, leaving just a breathing-space towards

the night air, and no more. Perhaps he may be able to tell next day whether he has slept or not. As the branches sink under him into the snow, and as they in turn press against him, he may begin to think of St Lawrence on the bars of his gridiron. Does he dream, whilst the fire still continues to crackle? "Is it the clang of the wild geese?" Or is the howling of the wolves really growing louder, and coming nearer?

Such a dormitory as we have in view may in some measure bring "tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep." Also, instead of restoring strength, it may increase the tired traveller's weakness and fatigue. If the temperature falls below 45 degrees (centigrade), the proverb "As the sparks fly upward" is falsified. The smoke not only refuses to rise, but seems to wish to choke all the travellers in one bunch. Again, at 60 or 70 degrees, the fire itself will refuse its services. And once more, if the wind changes, the flames, instead of being directed away from the sleepers, will leap over upon their blankets, as if to make a holocaust. And (as very often happens) when it snows at night, the would-be sleepers rise up from under a thick blanket much softer and whiter than their own.

The most dreaded enemy of those who camp out is the cyclone, which (in Scriptural phrase) suddenly shakes the wilderness, and uncovers the forest, makes the hoary old trees to skip like a calf, and then dashes them in pieces upon the ground. Mgr. Clut tells as follows how he kept his fifty-second birthday: "Brother Rousset, who was with me, determined to give me a feast-day supper. That is to say, along with a little moose meat, such as we had the other evenings, he gave me some rice and potato. After supper we were chatting, when a sudden storm arose, with great clouds of snow. We got under our blankets as quickly as possible. The fury of the storm increased so much that the trees were cracking over our heads and all around us, and I kept thinking all night that my fifty-second birthday would be my last. To seek a safer place in the circumstances was out of the question. I could only repeat many an *Angele Dei qui custos es mei*."

There is a particular penance, or penal servitude, or hard labour, borne by this missionary Bishop, which it would not be right to pass over, although it is not easy to describe without offence. The poor Indian is verminous from his scalp to his moccasins. His Paleface neighbour has no chance of escape. The Dog-rib Indians are especially favoured with such bosom friends. Father Roure was the

Dog-ribs' chaplain. Bishop Clut asked him, "How can you smile whilst thus eaten alive, you especially who were so nicely brought up?" "Oh, my lord, one gets used to it." Mgr. Clut could never get used to this particular penance, humiliation, and torture. Mosquitoes were bad enough, but *les poux*! summer lice! and winter lice! One day in 1872 at Fort Rae, after hearing confessions for three hours, the Bishop felt as if his soutane might easily walk by itself. He suffered what he called a real martyrdom. And there was no possibility of changing. While he was at dinner with Father Roure, the chief of the tribe came, leaning over the chair, to ask the Great Chief of Prayer if one might receive Holy Communion after eating those little animals. After giving his decision as a casuist, the Bishop tried to make the chief understand that whites objected to talk of such a thing at table. Quite useless! The chief continued his interesting discussion. The Bishop on another occasion was teaching catechism while seated on his traveling pack or bundle. A little girl took a rather large specimen from her bosom, and laid it down quietly on the Bishop's blanket. He made her take it away. She was carrying it to her mouth, when he checked her. An old woman of eighty asked, "Why?" "Those insects are nasty and disgusting," said the Bishop. "Oh, Great Chief of Prayer," said the old one, "my daughter is very fond of them; I assure you they are very nice."

We find the following note in the Bishop's handwriting: "Father Ducot has come from his mission at Fort Norman (on the Mackenzie). He tells us many things which I have often noticed, but which impress him because he is new. He has been edified by the good dispositions of the Indians in their camps and their hunting grounds. . . . The poverty and dirt of the Hare-skins in their wigwams have been brought home to him. He tells us with wonder how he saw children fighting for their share of what was brought out by the comb."

Young Father Ducot told also of another experience such as he had certainly never known among the well-to-do people of his native Bordeaux. A woman was doing a kind service to her brave, whose head and garments were, perhaps, just a little troublesome to him. But at the same time, she was regaling herself. The husband, without being able to quote the axiom, *Res clamat domino*, insisted that he was being deprived of his rights, and so these were duly admitted with feminine graciousness.

The disgusting habit which Bishop Clut so much detested

was universal in his Vicariate. The influence of the missionaries, and of the schools, and especially of the schools taught by the nuns, have made a great improvement in this respect. The Indians living near the mission-stations are more nearly civilized than those in the distant camps. The missionaries now, when they can return home to the mission, are freed from the condition which Louis Veuillot described in a famous *Univers* article under the heading *L'Evêque pouilleux*. It was of Mgr. Grandin, first Bishop of St Albert, that he wrote, but his words were equally applicable to Mgr. Clut. Veuillot said the Bishop was like a Benedict Labre, and was suffering as willingly, because everything that he suffered was an invocation of the blessing of God upon his labours for the poor abandoned ones. He represented the Bishop as saying to his hosts after dinner, *moitié souriant, moitié sérieux*: "Here we are at a good fire. And your soup was delicious. How often I have been cold in the North-West, and how often I have longed for a bowl of soup! And yet I have no wish to remain in France. I want to go back to my poor converts, away from you, my kind friends, my own people. When among them, cold and foodless like them, in a desert of ice, sleeping in the snow with the verminous and the dogs, I do not mind the question of the European who asks, What is the good of it all? I know the good of it. I know in whom I have believed. I know that into the darkness I am bringing light, into the icy air I am bringing the fire of divine love, into the shadow of death I am bringing divine life everlasting."

Such apostolic zeal as Louis Veuillot knew how to appreciate, such missionary careers of labour and suffering as those of Bishops Grandin and Clut, explain the very recent fraternal eulogy of the Oblate missionaries of the North-West by a distinguished Redemptorist missionary.

Father George Daly, C.S.S.R., in *Catholic Problems in Western Canada* (published in 1921), a book of light and leading, and a moving appeal for leadership, wrote as follows: "What tribute of admiration and gratitude do we not owe to the Oblate missionaries, who lived and died with the wandering children of the plains, who have kept the fires of faith burning, from the banks of the Red River to the Pacific coast, from the winding shores of the Missouri and Mississippi to the everlasting snows of the Arctic! Their lives of heroism furnish a bright splash on the rather drab and bleak landscape of what was known as the North-West territories. The Church of Canada will ever remain indebted to those noble pioneers of the Cross, apostolic Bishops and priests

of the first hour; their saintly lives are for-ever emblazoned on the pages of Canadian history; the western trails murmur their names in gratitude, and the children of the prairie still bless their memory by the dying fires of their camps" (p. 38).

It pleases Providence to work through secondary causes. The divine Saviour of men brings about divine effects by human machinery—through the words and works of men. But the human machine is not made to last indefinitely. After thirty years of penal servitude, chosen for Christ's sake, Bishop Clut got a warning that his term was near its close. In 1885, at Good Hope in the Far North, he spent seven months in bed. Poverty of blood, general exhaustion, œdema of legs and feet—such phrases were used to describe his state. When he recovered he wrote: "Perhaps I presumed too much upon my naturally robust constitution. Thirty years of missions, and of long and exhausting journeys, and so little nourishment at any time!"

He was again at Good Hope, when a second attack prostrated him in 1892-93. Mgr. Grouard, the new Vicar Apostolic, advised him not to go so far north, but to reside at St Bernard's Mission (now the town of Grouard), Lesser Slave Lake, in the modern Alberta. Mgr. Clut and this lake were old acquaintances. In the winter of 1881-82, when hunger drove him from the Fort Dunvegan Mission on the Peace River (beyond the Smoky River), and he was too late to go north to Lake Athabaska, he struck Lesser Slave Lake, and along with Father Husson walked its whole length of about eighty miles, in order to reach Lake La Biche, where Mgr. Faraud then lived. The two travellers were two days on the thick ice of the lake, which was like a mirror, and very slippery. Bishop Clut fell more than sixty times, and was very much hurt, his elbows and hands especially, which he used to stretch out before him to break the fall.

So he was no stranger to the lake near which he spent the last decade of his life. Even in those closing years he was not idle. He even put on the snow-shoes again, and gave Confirmation in several mission-stations. His assistant and guide on those journeys was Father Falher, of the Peace River, after whom a rising town has been named. Bishop Clut, during those last years, did much manual work, making a clearing in the forest for the various buildings of St Bernard's Mission.

His life's work, so laborious and so religious, was brought to an end by a stroke of apoplexy. He died on July 31, 1903. At the foot of a little wooden cross, at Lesser Slave

Lake, near to his spiritual son, Father Collignon, he sleeps in peace. If ever an epitaph marks his place of rest, perhaps some words written by himself in 1871 might serve. He had been instructing a camp of the Slave Indians, having journeyed more than 150 miles over the ice in order to reach them. He was preparing some of them for their first Communion, and all for Confirmation. A passer-by told them that he thought there was good game to be had at two days' journey from that place. Suddenly the tents were struck. The poor creatures would not wait to receive the sacraments the next day. Bishop Clut wrote: "My toil and trouble seem to have been of little use. But so it must be in these desolate deserts of the North. We spend much time in the search for a few unhappy beings, scattered here and there over immense territories. And if we find them, perhaps heresy is trying to snatch them from our hands. I hope God will take into account how much we suffer, and how often our heart bleeds, sacrificing ourselves for a flock not always grateful. Assuredly our reward is not here. We hope it is reserved for us in the world to come."

from another point of view. He was looking south from the neighbourhood of the fort itself.

"Fort Chipewyan (he wrote), built upon the heights which form the north bank of the lake, commands a magnificent view. To the east are the waters of that inland sea. To the south numerous islets, of various shapes and colours, standing out against the green and shimmering background of pine forests. The north is ringed around with the winding folds of its granite cincture, and the setting sun lights up the many small lakes, water-courses, sand-banks, and prairies, to the west of the great lake. In the summer the scene is really glorious. Alas! its variety and beauty have to be imagined during the seven monotonous months of snow and ice."

In modern maps Lake Athabaska is cut in two by the north-east boundary of Alberta. Of old, it was simply far away to the North-West, in *Les Pays d'en Haut*. As now well known to missionaries, its western side has given room for one mission, near Fort Chipewyan, in Alberta, its east end for another at Fond du Lac, in Saskatchewan. The reason why Father Faraud in 1849 chose a site for the mission at some distance from the rocky ground of the fort was that he found there a few acres of swamp, which it seemed possible by drainage to turn into the only soil that could be tilled in that part of the world.

Fort Chipewyan itself, on its barren rock, dates from the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was founded by the French North-West Trading Company. It was the chief rendezvous of the Montagnais tribe, who bartered their furs with the Company. By the way, these Montagnais of the North belong to the Déné nation; they have nothing in common with the Montagnais of Eastern Canada, who are Algonquins. Mention has been made, in previous pages, of the presence of Montagnais Indians much to the south of Lake Athabaska, at Ile à la Crosse, Cold Lake, and La Loche Portage. As we shall see later, they are to be found also far to the north. But within the memory of all white men, the neighbourhood of Fort Chipewyan has been the chief centre of that tribe. Over and above its advantages—common to all the hunting-grounds—of a good supply of the furry creatures, the place is most rich in fin and feathers, in the fine season of the year. In that fine season, the modern traveller, if he be a missionary, will often say with special feeling, "*Domine, Dominus noster*: Thou hast placed him over the works of thy hands: the wild beasts too; the birds of heaven; and the fishes of the sea." Over Lake

Athabaska, and its tributary lakes, as the seasons come and go, the fishes in abundance "traverse the paths of the sea," and the birds of heaven wing their way to rest upon the waters.

Every spring and every fall, on the western shores of Lake Athabaska, great flocks of wild geese, white or grey, of swans, and cranes, and ducks of many kinds, alight on their annual migrations to the north or to the south. In the month of May, they arrive from the sunny south, and give themselves a holiday of two or three weeks at the lake. Then, as at the word of command, they fly away for the far distant Arctic shores. In the three months of sunshine in the Farthest North, they bring up their young, and they take new wings, and renew their own youth, like the eagle. In greatly increased numbers, they are back at Lake Athabaska at the end of August, where they live and thrive and fatten, until the end of October. If a man has great patience, and is, moreover, like Nimrod, a mighty and stout hunter before the Lord, he may spend some pleasant hours of autumn in trying to shoot a few wild geese or ducks. Father Pascal (the late Bishop of Prince Albert) had quite a reputation among the Montagnais for his skill in stalking the feathered game. Be it known that the birds are more than shy. They recognize man as their enemy. On the sand-banks and mud-banks of the lake, and of the flooded prairies, they gather in such numbers as to hide the ground under a white and grey veil. But how hard it is to come within range of that great mass! On an alarm signal from their sentinels, the whole army, with shrill cries of complaint, rises into the air with such sudden and simultaneous force as literally to make the ground tremble. The beating of so many pairs of wings is like the noise of a train within a mountain gorge. The hasty retreat is at first a *saute qui peut*. But very soon the ranks are re-formed, and the whole company settles down in good order once more outside the danger zone.

When the waters are low, and the uncovered banks are therefore long and wide, the most stealthy sportsman or cellarer will have little chance of coming even within a mile of the birds he dooms to die to-day. But at high water, when the busy water-fowl are at the edge of an island, or on the very brink of the lake, one may creep slowly through brushwood, or behind rocks, until one group or other is within gunshot. But what a clang, what a chatter, rends the air with the first report! Perhaps two or three victims have been left on the soil. Very soon these are made a decoy

for their feathery brothers. A twig supports each head, making it seem to be looking up for assistance. The sniper, studying the wind, and the lie of the country, then chooses an ambush. His little Indian boy imitates the distressful cry of the wild goose—which no Paleface can imitate. Meanwhile, the frightened but not hurt birds are careering around in great circles, so great at first that they seem to be flying away altogether. But they hear the shrill deceitful cry. They wheel again and fly in gradually narrowing circles. Their enemy, with his finger on the trigger, already sees their outstretched necks, their dark eyes searching for those that call. A last semicircle, and down they are coming. The man with the fowling-piece, holding his breath hard, knows that he must not give them time to rise again. Just in the one instant when they hover, and see their mistake, bang ! bang ! and out of the mass a few other victims fall to the ground. These are soon fixed up like their predecessors, and the same trick is repeated time after time, for a whole day, or a whole week. Men themselves do not always learn by experience, and they are only too glad that the birds of the air cannot learn. Even when these are not all geese, their simplicity is very welcome to men who have charge of a larder. In the fort, the mission, and the wigwam, the winter will have no terrors after a good season with the birds, especially if the fishing also has been successful.

Fowling was in full swing when Father Taché landed at Fort Chipewyan on September 2, 1847. There were 200 Montagnais and fifteen Cree hunters or fowlers then at Lake Athabaska, with their families, but they laid their guns aside, and left themselves entirely in the hands of the "man of prayer" during the four weeks which he spent among them. These catechumens were all devoutly gathered round him when, on September 5, he celebrated the first Mass ever said in that high latitude.

They were enthusiastically devoted to their Blackrobe, who had come at last from so far away to teach them. They had been hoping and longing for his coming. Influenced by their *métis* friends, those poor outcast Red Men had been saying in their own language, just like St Paul's man of Macedonia, "Come over and help us; come and teach us to be good, to live according to prayer, and to please the Great Spirit on high." One afternoon, Father Taché sat chatting for a while with the officer in charge of the fort. A Montagnais came into the house—as is their custom, without waiting for anyone's leave—and said to Father Taché:

“Why stay talking to this little chief? There are many Montagnais waiting for you in your own room. They want to hear your instructions.”

Father Taché did, in truth, day and night, devote himself to the instruction of them all—men, women, and children. In that first visit in 1847 there were 194 baptisms, and polygamy was ended. In 1848, Father Taché, returning to Lake Athabaska, found his neophytes still faithful to their good resolutions and promises, although their fervid feelings in religious observances had grown somewhat cold.

In 1849, Father Faraud settled down at Lake Athabaska. Like the monks of old, he set himself to drain that swamp of which we have spoken. As he hoped, he did find a plot of ground beneath it, a plot which continues to be cultivated, with such success as is possible in that climate. With his own hands also Father Faraud built a little house and chapel, which he dedicated as the Nativity Mission on September 8, 1851. The visitor of the present day to the Fort Chipewyan or Nativity Mission probably knows nothing of the early hardships and privations, and contents himself with admiring a new and pretty church, a good priests' house, a convent, in which twelve nuns take care of 150 inmates, a little steamer belonging to the mission, and a very useful sawmill.

But the early trials, uncertainties, and disappointments ought not to be forgotten. In the *Codex Historicus* of the mission, Father Pascal wrote on October 20, 1889: “The boat has come back from Bustard Island, bringing word of the loss of nearly all the nets of Burntwood Island—ten large nets. Our men, camping on the island, had spread their nets between the island and Sable or Sandy Point, where the water was three fathoms deep. Brother Hémon was counting upon a great catch, for the lake was full of fish. But a sudden gale from the west lashed the waters of the lake into fury. Then, when the wind fell, the current raged just as fiercely in the opposite direction, sweeping away both nets and fish, without leaving a trace of them behind. Two days later, the waters were frozen in the inlets and bays. Of course, nothing could be recovered.”

Famine was no stranger at the Nativity Mission. In the winter of 1887-88, many a time in the mission-house and the convent it was not known how even the smallest portion of food could be provided for the children the next day. No fish to be had. No chance of a caribou. Hardly a chance of catching a hare. All the Indians in the neighbourhood were starving. Some of them saved their lives by eating human flesh. Two young girls did more. They

began by eating the corpse of the first person who died. Afterwards, they killed twenty-nine of their own relations and neighbours in order to have a good supply of food. The other members of the camp, more dead than alive, were terror-stricken, and sought protection from the priests, whom they had always refused to see until then. The kind services of the poor missionaries touched their hearts, and they accepted the "prayer" teaching. The chief gave up his superstitious practices, and chose one lawful wife and became a model Christian.

The missionaries of the Montagnais at Chipewyan, between 1847 and 1920, were Fathers Taché, Faraud, Grollier, Grandin, Clut, Grouard, Eynard, Tissier, Laity, Pascal, de Chambeuil, Croisé, Laffont, Bocquené, Riou, Le Treste, and the present coadjutor Bishop, Mgr. Joussard.

Father Le Doussal is the missionary of the Crees in that place since 1875. He relates how on June 18, 1908, the old house of Nativity Mission, used as a shed, was accidentally set on fire. In an hour it was simply a large furnace. The whole of the mission was in imminent danger—the new dwelling-house, the church, and the convent. Part of the house did actually take fire, and at a height which there was no means of reaching. In the midst of the general alarm, a promise and vow of a novena of Masses and Communions was made in honour of our Lady of Lourdes, and in a few minutes, without apparent reason, the fire died down, and all danger was over. The damage done was, of course, considerable, but it was small compared with the disaster which was narrowly escaped. It is not wonderful that the missionaries have been ever accustomed to look upon Mary Immaculate, our Lady of Lourdes, as their special protectress and Mother.

Two of the missionaries of the Montagnais ought to have more than mere mention in this chapter—Father Eynard, because he is buried at Lake Athabaska, and Bishop Grouard for other reasons.

Germain Eynard, born in 1824 at Genoa, studied in the University of France and the École Polytechnique. Naturally, the lamp of faith in his soul grew dim in such surroundings. He graduated with distinction, and obtained a good post as civil engineer under the Administration des Eaux et Forêts. He was a busy and a studious man, whose life was pure. But his heart was far from God. One Sunday, his housekeeper refused to prepare a grand dinner for some friends whom he was inviting. It was unnecessary servile work, and it would keep her from Mass, she said. The un-

expected rebuke roused his Christian instincts. He reflected, and he soon began to pray, and to study Auguste Nicolas. In a short time, he gave up his position, and entered the Grand Seminary of Metz, which he left in 1853, in order to join the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He wished to be sent on the hardest foreign mission, and he surely found himself there when he reached Fort Resolution in 1858. For fifteen years he served various missions on the Mackenzie, Great Slave Lake, and Lake Athabaska. To catechize the poor Indians, he travelled on snow-shoes distances which would have surprised even the old *coureurs des bois*. Yet his constitution was frail. But his cheerful social intercourse, his unselfish devotedness, his humility and mortification never failed him.

We read in a letter written to the Superior General by Mgr. Grandin: "Father Eynard arrived here on Holy Thursday, April 19, 1862. His ears, cheeks, and nose were frost-bitten. What was the reason of this in such a season, seeing that I have travelled in the very frostiest season without losing more than the epidermis of nose and face? The reason is that Father Eynard is too mortified. In our winter journeys, there is no call for deliberate mortification. I always take three meals when I can, and I carry a piece of frozen pemmican in my pocket. Father Eynard would not allow himself such a privilege in Holy Week. I was edified, but not pleased, and I beg you to charge him and the others not to do such things in this part of the world. I can assure you that their inevitable mortification ought to content them."

The first Mackenzie missionaries had been dispensed by Mgr. Taché from keeping the fasts of the Church. Good Father Eynard used to apply for "an exemption from the dispensation"! To Mgr. Taché also he wrote as follows: "I hope you will be able to let me have drawing paper on which to sketch the stations. You know how helpful the devotion of the Way of the Cross is, and it would revive my own fervour. I may say that I studied drawing for two years and a half, but if you think what I propose would take too much time, I shall be content."

In a confidential report to a Superior, the same Father Eynard wrote: "I attended regularly poor Cayen (who had been an enemy of the missionaries). Unlike the other Indians, he was afraid of death. Yet he had little reason to be attached to life. He had no one belonging to him; he could walk only with crutches; and for several winters he had hardly been able to move at all. At last, through the 'bad

disorder,' he could not even move his fingers. A week before his death, he seemed to grow resigned. He was like a corpse. He had to be lifted and turned, on his filthy rags, by the hands of another. The only Indian woman in the place soon became too disgusted to look after him any longer. I walked the six miles every day to see him, and I had to do everything for him, no matter how repulsive and humiliating. I consoled myself with the thought that I was tending the suffering members of Jesus Christ."

Father Eynard lost his life in Lake Athabaska on August 6, 1873. He was accustomed to bathe early, and he was a good swimmer. He used to rise very early, and after his meditation go down to the lake. Then he would return to his devotions, and ring the community bell at 5 o'clock. On August 6, Father Laity, hearing no bell, went to the church. He found Father Eynard's meditation book open at the feast of the day, the Transfiguration. His cross was on the edge of the great wooden holy-water stoup, which Mgr. Faraud, in early days, had carved from a block he found among flotsam and jetsam on the shore. Father Laity went in all haste to the bank, where he found the bather's clothes. The body was found in only four feet of water. The arms were almost folded; the face quite calm. Death seemed to have been instantaneous. Father Eynard was deeply lamented by the Protestants of Fort Chipewyan, no less than by the Catholics. Both Bishop Grandin and Bishop Faraud wrote feelingly about the loss of "such a model Religious and priest."

Another typical missionary of the North is Bishop Grouard, Vicar Apostolic of Athabaska. His lordship, now over eighty years of age, wears a venerable beard, which has grown white, he declares, because he has been for so many years rolling in the snow. The Déné Indians know the Bishop as Yaltri-beh-da-ra-shlan (the praying one-his-chin-hair-much of it).

Emile Grouard was born in the diocese of Le Mans on February 2, 1840. In 1860, his cousin, the newly consecrated Bishop Grandin, brought him from France to Canada, where he was to complete his theological studies in the Quebec Seminary, before becoming an Oblate novice. But a letter written by Mgr. Grandin at Lake Athabaska, in 1861, to Mgr. Taché caused a change of plans. Mgr. Grandin wrote: "Father Clut cannot remain alone here at Nativity Mission. He is poorly, and not able to fend for himself. Could you not send young Abbé Grouard from Quebec? He could make his noviciate under Father Clut. The

Superior General arranged that he was to stay with you or me whilst a novice. But, considering our difficulties, I am sure he would agree to what I now propose, especially as I could myself admit this postulant to begin his noviciate, and could even ordain him, unless you do so yourself. If he must wait to be ordained by me, let him not forget to bring my Pontifical from Ile à la Crosse."

Mgr. Taché, when he got this letter, or soon after, was at Boucherville, his native place, and the home of his ancestors. He sent at once for Abbé Grouard, whom he ordained priest, at that place, on May 3, 1862. Soon after, he brought the new priest to St Boniface, where he gave him the Religious habit. The next day, Whit Sunday, June 8, he sent him on his way to Lake Athabaska, where the youthful voyager arrived on August 2, 1862.

Father Clut was his novice master, and his teacher of the Montagnais tongue. Father Grouard was soon able to catechize and preach. We have found in writing how the Indians first impressed him. "I like the Montagnais—except for their trying to get every mortal thing that we have. They are cheerful, and pleasant, and even facetious in their own way. I never expected to find Indian women so talkative, and so ready to laugh. Human nature is evidently the same all over the world. The surface here is not, of course, so polished as elsewhere! Still, the veneer is not altogether absent."

It may be mentioned here how in 1865 Father Grouard proved to his professor of Montagnais that he had been a very apt pupil. Father Clut was once more alone at Chipewyan, and had no hope of seeing a brother priest for a long time. Father Grouard was at Fort Providence, but some business brought him to the south of Great Slave Lake, and he pushed on as far as Lake Athabaska. One day a Montagnais "savage" dropped in, "casual like," to see Father Clut. He was covered with hoar-frost, and carried his snow-shoes under his arm. In the usual fashion, he began at once to ask and to tell the priest all the news about everything and nothing, clacking his gutturals, and hissing his sibilants, in the most orthodox style. After a while, the Montagnais seemed to think he might be carrying things too far, so he threw off his caribou hood, and lo and behold! the former novice was in the embrace of his novice-master, who had not seen him since 1863.

It was on November 21, 1863, that Father Grouard made his Oblation, in the hands of Mgr. Grandin. Fifty years later, he wrote to the Superior General that his religious

profession was a great grace granted him by God and the Immaculate Mother, and he added: "To-day I prayed by the tomb of Mgr. Grandin at St Albert, and I begged him who had received my vows to let me renew them at his feet."

Even before his Oblation, Father Grouard went on a missionary tour to missions very far north—Fort Simpson on the Mackenzie, and Fort Liard on the river of the same name, a tributary of the Mackenzie. He always thinks that the best years of his life were those he spent in evangelizing the Slave Indians at Forts Providence, Simpson, Liard, and Nelson (in the Rockies, north-east corner of British Columbia), or in the scattered camps between those forts. He remained the missionary of that tribe until the autumn of 1874. Among the papers of Mgr. Taché at St Boniface, a letter has been preserved which may be taken as describing many a journey of many a missionary in the great North-West. It was written to Bishop Taché by Father Grouard, from Nativity Mission, Lake Athabaska, on December 27, 1869. We insert it here, only adding in brackets the distances traversed, as nearly as may be calculated.

"MONSEIGNEUR ET TRÈS CHER PÈRE,

"I will certainly tell your lordship, as well as I can, the sort of wandering Jew life that I have led since my letter of 1868. On March 12, 1868, as the northern express was going through Fort Providence, I took a dog train as far as Fort Simpson (150 miles). The weather was so bad, the snow was so deep, and the ice hummocks on the river so numerous, that the express could not take me on. From Fort Simpson I sent back my dogs and sled to Providence, and I made my way on foot to Fort Liard (200 miles), and to Fort Nelson (140 miles). Of course, I had to leave all luggage behind, taking only a blanket. But the Company's officials kindly carried for me in their sled everything absolutely necessary for Mass. I reached Fort Nelson on April 5, after walking sometimes by night and sometimes by day, according as the weather permitted, but nearly always in water or melting snow. From Fort Nelson I went back to Liard in a canoe made of the bark of a sort of pine or fir tree called *épinette*. I think this kind of canoe is used only on the Fort Nelson, Liard, and Peace Rivers. It is a very frail boat. The bark is thin, and is bound and strengthened with a number of switches about the thickness of one's finger. The Indians of the country live at a distance from the river. In the spring they come to the riverside, and make as many canoes as they want. The bark of one tree

makes one canoe. In the canoes they go down the river to the trading fort. Once there, they have no further use for a canoe, as they return home through the woods. My canoe therefore cost me only the trouble of picking it up. Such a boat may be made in half a day, but it has only a short life. Like other canoeists, I left my boat at Fort Liard for the next comer, and I returned to Fort Simpson, and thence to Fort Providence (on the Mackenzie and Great Slave Lake) in the Company's barges.

"In the beginning of December, 1868, I left Providence in order to bring back Father Gascon to St Joseph's Mission (Fort Resolution), Great Slave Lake (160 miles). I remained there only one day, returning to Fort Providence for Christmas. After Christmas, in sick calls, and in search of some moose killed on the hunting-grounds by our men, I covered about 100 miles.

"Towards the end of February, 1869, I went again to St Joseph's with Mgr. Faraud. Back again to Fort Providence. Thence, once more to Fort Simpson. Next to Fort Liard again, where I spent the spring. Returned to Fort Simpson, and, after a week there, went back up the Mackenzie to Fort Providence, from which I went (eighty miles) to Hay River, Great Slave Lake. Soon again I was at Fort Providence, on the lookout for the barges from La Loche Portage.

"As soon as they came, I took the road once more to Simpson, Liard, and Nelson. I was back at Fort Liard in the middle of October, 1869, and spent a month there all alone. On November 18, I left for Fort Simpson, which I reached on the 25th. I set off again on November 30, and arrived at Fort Providence on December 4, though that journey usually takes seven days. In forty-eight hours—i.e., in the evening of December 6—I started for Great Slave Lake (Fort Resolution), and I got there on December 10, though it is counted a journey of six days. On December 13, I left Great Slave Lake for Lake Athabaska, from which I now write, having arrived here in six days instead of ten (320 miles). After New Year's Day, I am to set out again for the round journey to Fort Liard. All those winter journeys were made on foot, and most frequently in front of the dogs, making a pathway for them. On the first, second, third, and fourth of the Sundays of Advent this year (1869), I had the happiness of singing High Mass, in succession, at Fort Simpson, Fort Providence, Fort Resolution, and Fort Chipewyan.

"You may ask, my dear lord, why I have come to Lake



GREAT SLAVE LAKE

Athabaska. I have come to visit my old and dear companion, Father Eynard, and to make the acquaintance of Father Laity, and to revisit the Nativity Mission, where I began my missionary career. Such happiness is ample compensation for fatigue or hardship."

"Errors and omissions excepted," it seems that the total number of miles covered in about two years by this mighty walker before the Lord was more than 4,000. And assuredly, in all his journeys, he "bore mid snow and ice a banner with the strange device, Excelsior."

In 1870, Father Grouard wrote again to Mgr. Taché, but not in such good spirits.

"PROVIDENCE MISSION,
"December 5, 1870.

"I am no longer the itinerant missionary for Forts Simpson, Liard, and Nelson. They have clipped my wings, and put me in a pretty cage. I do not at all feel at home. My new functions are not those for which I seem made. I like what I may call a rough and vagrant sort of life, and I think I have just about enough knowledge and piety to teach the catechism to the Indians. Now I have to be novice master, and to direct the consciences of some nuns! My consolation is that I am only a tool in the hands of my Superiors. But I still entertain the preference for my old way of life. How happy I was in solitude, free from all care, with only myself and my Indians to give me concern! To supervise, to give orders, to look after others, and to provide for the needs of all, especially in temporals, is a trouble to me and a trial.

"But in one thing I can report progress—of which I am proud. Brother Boisramé has made me quite a good sawyer. This winter, he and I have sawed 1,300 planks or joists for our future chapel, and we expect to saw even a greater number next year."

In 1873 Father Grouard's health broke down. There were many who thought his foreign mission days were over. He lost his voice so completely as not to be able to say Mass or to recite his Office. And this was not his worst symptom. Mgr. Faraud sent him to Europe to seek a specialist's care. In the fall of 1874 he left Fort Providence. Two years of native air and of medical treatment restored his health. He turned the two years to good account for the benefit of the Northern missions. He learned printing and binding, and he improved his skill in painting pictures, taking draw-

ing lessons from the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He wrote at the time: "I hope to be able, when I return, to do something better than those daubs which I left at Forts Providence and Liard." As a matter of fact, there is a mural painting by him over nearly every High Altar from St Albert (Edmonton) to the Farthest North. At Dunvegan, on the Peace River (between Clear Hills and Birch Hills, on the map), where he could find nothing to serve as a canvas, however inferior, he painted a Calvary scene, with four figures, on a large moose-skin. He sent a Beaver (Castor) Indian to choose the biggest animal he could find, and to shoot it in the head. The picture, looking as fresh as when painted in 1883, may still be seen in the little church at Peace River Landing.

When Father Grouard returned to the North-West in 1876, Mgr. Faraud kept him at that mission which we have so often named, Lake La Biche, now in Alberta. The Bishop looked upon him as an adviser and assistant, who might perhaps be his successor. With the exception of three years (1883-86) spent at Dunvegan, Father Grouard was stationed from 1876 to 1888 at La Biche, where, besides attending sick calls, he was catechist, preacher, compositor, printer, binder—and author. He wrote and printed some little books on the Old and the New Testament, and some prayer and hymn books, all in five different languages—viz., Montagnais, Hare-skin, Loucheux (Squint-eyed), Castor, and Cree. He tells us himself that he was helped by an apprentice to the printing trade, not, however, a talented and ambitious young Red Indian, he says, but the Bishop, Mgr. Faraud, "who was never discouraged by all his printer's errors and pie."

In 1888 Father Grouard was sent to be Superior at the Nativity Mission, Lake Athabaska. In 1889 he visited the Vicariate for Bishop Faraud. In 1890 he stayed with the Eskimos, at the mouths of the Mackenzie, long enough to learn their language, and to make some hymns for them.

On October 18, 1890, his Bulls as Titular Bishop of Ibora and Vicar Apostolic of Athabaska-Mackenzie were issued. In 1891 they reached himself at the Mission of the Seven Dolours, Fond du Lac, at the east end of Lake Athabaska. On August 1, 1891, he was consecrated by Archbishop Taché at St Boniface.

We have said something in a previous chapter about the progress made in the Vicariate of Athabaska-Mackenzie under the direction, and by the personal labours, of Mgr. Grouard. He was the tireless voyager, mendicant, and

builder. New institutions sprang up under his hand. The silent icy solitudes of the North were amazed by the sound of his sawmills and steamboats. When the mill at the Nativity Mission and the convent orphanage at Fort Vermilion were burnt down, he built them again better than before. His courage and his trust in God never failed him. The rush to the Klondike in 1897 made him petition for a division in his Vicariate. In 1901 the Holy See named a Vicar Apostolic for the Mackenzie and Yukon in the person of Bishop Breynat, leaving to Bishop Grouard Athabaska and the Peace River plains.

Mgr. Grouard has been over thirty years a Bishop, and over sixty years a missionary priest, but he has not yet grown old, for his heart is young, his spirit is high, his eye is not dim, and the fire of his zeal has not grown cold. It is a great joy to know that at last the Bishop has been prevailed upon to write some of his reminiscences. They will surely make a wonderfully attractive book. He is likely to tell, for instance, in some detail, the story of his journey in 1898 from Fort Providence to St Albert—say, 900 miles. He started on February 5, and arrived on March 26. Half the journey was made on foot, on snow-shoes, and half in a dog-sled. The traveller almost always camped out in the open air, and in the snow. In 1900, like Mgr. Clut much earlier, he visited Yukon, crossing the Rockies by the Rat River, fatal to so many miners. This Yukon journey he made on foot and by canoe. The bed of the river he described as like an immense staircase with thousands of curves and zigzags. The mountains are on both sides, and from them great blocks of stone rolled down, making the course of the river a perpetual succession of rapids and windings. No sooner had the travellers got safely through one danger than they saw the beginning of another. It was only after twelve days of fatiguing exertions, and narrow escapes, that they reached the Height of Land between the Mackenzie and Yukon basins.

In 1906 an "episcopal sled" was presented to Bishop Grouard, in which he is now able to travel in as much state and comfort as in a prison van. He describes his experience of it as follows: "The Brother wraps me up in my blankets, leaving me free, however, to look upon the stars, while I recite many a rosary, the breviary of the travelling missionary. Meanwhile, the dogs trot, trot, trot, their jingling bells making the only sound to reach my ears. There is no monotony, however. The lake is not like a rink or a macadamized road. Ice blocks and hardened snow-wreaths have

to be taken into account, and as the sled is very narrow, the poor Bishop often finds himself embracing, not mother-earth, but the frozen lake, whose icy kiss is terrible. In the daytime the Brother is able to save me many a fall, but in the night all he can do is to help me up again. I do not always need this episcopal state coach. It is true I do not go so fast on the snow-shoes now as of old, but I am still good for a few hours of steady marching. I can do a pipe, as we all say in the North still, like the old *coureurs des bois*, and the Indians. The distance of a pipe, or a smoke, is a little bit vague, however. It must vary with the road, the season, and the voyager."

In the winter of 1907, Mgr. Grouard and Brother Poulain were making their way through a forest between Lake Wabaska and Lesser Slave Lake. For two days all went well, as many Indians attending a mission had gone on before them, and so there was a sort of beaten path. After the two days, there was no trail. The Bishop and the Brother took it in turns to walk in front, with a hatchet, to clear a way over the trees blown down by the wind. Sometimes they had to pass through the remains of a great forest fire, and to meet such barricades of interlaced and burnt trees as obliged them to go very fatiguing distances out of the straight road. One consolation was that their hard work warmed them, for the cold was very keen. There were 40, 45, 50, and even 54 degrees centigrade below zero. It was impossible to sleep at night, no matter how great a fire was made. The Bishop could not help reflecting that two months earlier he had been very comfortable in Rome.

In 1911, one of the young Oblate Fathers at Nativity Mission was greatly surprised to see in what strange style there arrived there the venerable and dignified Bishop who had ordained him deacon at Liège in Belgium. "Grand Dieu!" said he. The Bishop's hat in particular "left much to be desired," and he was persuaded to wear a "tile" for a day or two. He explained to all whom it concerned that he liked being well dressed, but there was no use in trying to do the gentleman, when you were spending two or three weeks in a small cattle boat full of sacks of flour.

In this chapter, concerning missionary work for the Montagnais by Bishop Grouard and others, we have been much concerned with the chief place of resort of that tribe, the neighbourhood of Fort Chipewyan. This fort, on its rocky promontory over Lake Athabaska, has a conspicuous historical place among the European outposts of the North-West. Its line of whitewashed houses, and its neat Pro-

testant church, have borne quite a homely look to tourists who have ventured so far north in the summer season. Like other Hudson Bay posts, Fort Chipewyan has given generous hospitality, as to missionaries, so to many a visitor. In a book published a few years ago by an English lady we may read about Fort Chipewyan, and in general about the makers of the New North at work and at play. As the missionaries may well be considered the best workers, we will borrow from the lady traveller only her description of a ball at Fort Chipewyan, in which she shows us some of the Northerners at play. Louis the Mouse was the caller of the dancers, who were in moccasins on the earthen floor. No one dared disobey Louis, who ordered movements thus:

“Ladeez, join de lily-white han’s,
Gents, your black-and-tan !
Ladeez, bow ! Gents, bow-wow !
Swing ’em as hard ’s ye can.

“Swing your corner Lady,
Then the one you love !
Then your corner Lady,
Then your Turtle Dove.”

After this little bit of frivolity, we will say good-bye to Fort Chipewyan, along with good Bishop Grouard himself. Of late years that vigorous Vicar Apostolic has lived more to the south-west of Lake Athabaska—viz., in the neighbourhood of Lesser Slave Lake, and in the Peace River plains. He tells us of an adventure there which had nothing to do with either snow-shoes or canoes. He was riding from Lesser Slave Lake to Peace River Landing—at the point where the Smoky and North Heart Rivers join the Peace. The trail, or very primitive cart-road, used by the missionaries for fifty years, led quite literally “o’er moor and fen, o’er crag and torrent,” through muskeg and rocky grounds, where more than one broken-down cart had been left to rot. The Bishop’s nag had grazed well on the prairie before starting, and was well lined. After a ride of many hours, a real slough of despond had to be negotiated. The rider had not remarked that his saddle was no longer tight and secure, as in the morning, and when his mount sank and plunged, and again sank and plunged, off came the saddle, and down came the Bishop on his back, in the mud and water. There was no fear, however, of even an accidental kick from an animal so bogged. The rider picked himself up, carried his saddle, helped his horse out, and was soon able to reach a prairie, where he dried himself in the sun,

and gave his Rosinante time to graze. The old quagmire road here mentioned was about 100 miles long. It is no longer used, for a railroad now runs to Peace River.

Mgr. Grouard has for a few years past lived most usually at St Bernard's Mission, which (like the Hudson Bay Company's post) is at the north-west corner of Lesser Slave Lake. Though he visits the distant missions even now, he knows that a more active traveller still is his coadjutor, Mgr. Joussard, whose central post is at Fort Chipewyan. St Bernard's Mission is now a considerable establishment, having begun in the days when all the world was before every new settler, and no one would question the right of any good subject to possess "a few acres of snow." Besides church and priests' house, there are two convents, in the pretty little town now rising where of old there were only the fur-trading post and the mission. Bishop Grouard, besides looking after his communities, and his Indians, and his orphans, has some responsibility for Europeans also. And these friendly new-comers have so admired the Bishop's work, as the pioneer and founder of that settlement, that they have given the name of Grouard to the little "city" on which St Bernard's Church looks down in blessing. And so it has come to pass that the Titular Bishop of Ibora may be called in correct French style Monseigneur de Grouard.

CHAPTER XIII

FOND DU LAC: THE CARIBOU-EATERS

TOWARDS the east end of Lake Athabaska, and within the bounds of the new prairie province of Saskatchewan, is the Mission of Fond du Lac, which was founded in 1853, by Father Grollier, for the benefit of an Indian tribe known as Caribou-eaters. The mission was placed under the protection of our Lady of the Seven Dolours, and for various reasons it has always remained dear to all the missionaries who have ever served it.

Lake Athabaska, which is between fifteen and twenty miles broad, is 200 miles long from west to east. The real east "end of the lake" is where it issues into the Black River. But the name Fond du Lac was given by the early traders and the missionaries to a spot on the north coast, about forty miles less easterly, and therefore about 160 miles from Nativity Mission at Fort Chipewyan. The lake at this spot is only about a mile broad, and forms a strait which is full of fish in due season. The same narrows are frequented by the caribou, whether they have to swim across, or to walk over the ice. The early fur traders found many Indians in that place, and built a trading post there.

In the climate of the Riviera, such a Fond du Lac, with its glorious view of blue waters, to a far distant horizon, on either hand, would justly be called magnificent. But the missionary's humble lodging in the northern clime will not attract the visitor coming from old Europe. The little Mission of the Seven Dolours, standing amid Indian lodges on cliffs bare and unfenced, is exposed to all the airs that blow, and those airs are often such squalls as cannot foster any holiday mood.

The attraction of the mission is in its faithful flock. A fine race those tall Red Men, still unspoiled because they have so little known the Paleface invaders. They are Montagnais, of the same stock, and speaking the same dialect, as those of Fort Chipewyan, but of unmixed blood. They call themselves by a name which tells how they live—Etshen Eldeli (Caribou-eaters).

The North American caribou, as is well known, is the

Lapland and Labrador reindeer. It is of a dappled, reddish-brown colour, with a mane hanging over neck and dewlap, both stag and doe carrying long, branching antlers. The legs are short and sturdy, the cloven hoofs are broad, and the muzzle is not unlike that of the ass. The caribou stands between three and four feet high. Such is the wonderful little animal, which may be said to be everything to the Indian. It gives him "board and lodging," and also clothes him. Every part of the caribou is valuable. Its flesh, its milk, its skin, its hair (whether long or short), its antlers, its bones, and its hoofs, are all turned to good account by the Indian hunter. The caribou, although naturally rather fierce—like the proverbial "animal méchant"—can be tamed, and the Lapland reindeer carries a sled over the snow much faster than a dog. But the Red Men cannot be persuaded to imitate the Lapps. Hence the Canadian Government only lost money some years ago by importing Newfoundland reindeer into the Mackenzie district, and trying to teach the Indians to harness them. The Indians maintain that if a caribou were captured alive, its spirit would visit the other caribou to report that loss of freedom, and that the Déné hunting-grounds would see the caribou race no more.

The absolutely free country where the caribou do abound is the Barren Land of the Far North. "Barren Land" and "Dismal Lakes" well describe a region which may yet perhaps be utilized by civilized men, if civilization lasts. Those treeless plains are covered with a whitish, thick, and soft moss, which seems to draw its nourishment out of the rock which it carpets. On this abundant and delicious moss the caribou feed all through the Arctic summer, in the months of the midnight sun. At the approach of winter, they leave the barren steppes, and come south and south-west into the woods which border upon the Great Bear Lake, Great Slave Lake, and Lake Athabaska. Wherever they still find mosses to eat, they follow towards the milder air. Hence their passage in great numbers at Fond du Lac.

In former times, the Caribou-eaters used to keep in touch with their prey in summer as well as in winter. But since fur trading began they are usually content to follow the caribou no farther than the border of the Barren Lands. About the beginning of November, Fond du Lac expects to see again the welcome arrivals from the North. Usually they appear to be as numerous as the wild geese about Fort Chipewyan. Those who have seen the forest of dancing antlers, and have heard with their own ears the clatter and

rattle of innumerable hoofs in a galloping charge over the hard ice of the lake, declare that it is impossible for words to convey any description of the scene to one who has not been himself an eye and ear witness. But we can see in imagination the antlered monarchs of the northern waste "tossing their beamed frontlets to the sky" as lightly and as proudly as if clearing the copse with one brave bound "in lone Glenartney's hazel shade."

The Indians about Fond du Lac are ready for the coming of the caribou. They know where to expect them, and they know also how to turn their movements towards the sharpshooters, who lie in wait. At the signal to fire, all the guns go off together. Then, what a scene of confusion! The frightened animals race in all directions. Many lie dead upon the snow. Thomson, in "The Seasons," sympathizes with the one hunted stag, whose fair jutting chest and beauteous checkered sides are marked with gore (*Autumn*, 456). But the Indians are no mere idle sportsmen. They are looking for their daily food. And they are far from grieving to see that many victims have fallen to their guns, and that the snowy plain in many a spot is crimson. It is a successful hunt of this sort which secures the Caribou-eaters and their missionaries against want during the winter.

But sometimes there is failure, not success. The wind has blown persistently from east to west, or an inexperienced scout has frightened the caribou away from their usual track, or some other cause, unknown, has had the same effect, and then there will be no caribou within hundreds of miles of Fond du Lac. In old times, such a misfortune would have meant starvation for the Indians. They were accustomed to be hunters only, and they cared nothing for the fish in which the lakes abounded. Indeed, they had no means of taking the fish. Hence many of them died of hunger before the coming of the missionaries, who showed them how to use both rod and net, and taught them the value of fish as food.

It was towards the end of the eighteenth century that the North-West Fur Company built a fort at Fond du Lac. It was taken and plundered by the Indians, who also massacred all the inmates. The Palefaces did not venture again into that part until after the missionaries had kindled the light of faith at Lake Athabaska. Indians from Fond du Lac had been at Fort Chipewyan, and had willingly heard from Father Taché and Father Faraud what the Great Spirit on high said in his commandments about respect for the life and limb and property of others. In 1853, in the first

barge which went from Chipewyan to Fond du Lac, Father Grollier was one of the passengers, and so he became the first apostle of the Caribou-eaters.

Among the 600 Indians whom he found at Fond du Lac he spent the winter and spring, 1853-54. He then returned to the Nativity Mission in order to leave Father Faraud free to visit Great Slave Lake and the Peace River. In the spring of each succeeding year until 1858, Father Grollier revisited his Caribou-eaters. In the years immediately following, Fathers Clut, Séguin, Eynard, and Faraud were the missionaries of Fond du Lac.

Father Clut was the zealous worker there on no less than nine separate occasions. In 1862, when he was expecting to complete the work of the conversion of the whole tribe, he found at the little Mission of our Lady of the Seven Dolours, instead of the promised general assembly, only a few faithful souls. The bulk of his flock had been led back into paganism by two "prophets." Many of the Caribou-eaters had learned to blaspheme the name of Him whom the Roman pagans had recognized as the *Magnus qui colitur in urbibus*. Some of the same Indians had turned their rosaries into chains for their calumets, and many had gone back to polygamy. Father Clut saw that only a resident missionary could remedy matters. For some years, it was impossible to supply one, but each itinerant missionary spent as long as he possibly could at Fond du Lac. At last, in 1875, under Mgr. Faraud, our Lady of the Seven Dolours was provided with a resident priest, and since that time the Caribou-eaters have had no more to do with false prophets. Indeed, they say they have given to the Church two Great Chiefs of Prayer (Yalti Néthé), Bishops Pascal and Breynat.

We have already told how Albert Pascal, when a tonsured seminarist at Viviers, "leaving all things," and not even going to say good-bye to his family, accompanied Mgr. Clut to the Northern missions in 1870. Twenty-one years later, when (again at Viviers) he was consecrated Bishop, as the first Vicar Apostolic of Saskatchewan, his old professor, Abbé Desmartin, told in a public speech what the young seminarist had said to him when going away: "There are many priests in France. But in the far North-West there are many tribes who have no one to tell them the name of Jesus Christ. I know my mother will be greatly afflicted, but we shall meet in heaven, please God. It is better for me not to go to see her now. I am taking God for my Father, the Blessed Virgin for my Mother, Mgr. Clut for my director and guide, and the Indians for my brethren."

In the years 1870-73, Abbé Pascal studied theology in Montreal, where he was ordained priest on All Saints' Day, 1873. July, 1874, found him at Nativity Mission, Lake Athabaska. From 1875 to 1881, he served the mission at Fond du Lac. The state of things among the Caribou-eaters in 1875 was far from satisfactory. Mgr. Clut, who placed Father Pascal in charge, tells us that some of them were still obstinate pagans, and others had been excommunicated as incorrigible.

The hut of which Father Pascal took possession was both chapel and residence. It was twenty-seven feet by seventeen, and had been built in 1855 by Father Grollier. The chapel had just room for a little altar, the priest, and two acolytes. When the door was open, the only other apartment served for nave of this primitive church. The building was lighted by a few panes of glass and by parchment. One corner served for the priest's alcove. The hut was partly a log cabin, and partly a mud cabin. The mud was the only mortar, and it filled the gaps between the logs. The walls of the hut were six feet high. There was no ceiling. The supporting beams of the roof hardly allowed a tall man to stand erect. The hut was thatched with bark and mud, which did not keep out the rain or the melting snow.

Such was the ordinary style of mission-hut in the North-West. Sometimes a curtain, instead of a folding-door, shut off the altar. In one such chapel on a certain Christmas Day, Mgr. Clut, wearing his mitre, sat down, for the *Gloria in Excelsis*, on the best box in the establishment, which had been covered with a beautiful silky deer-skin. The cautious Father Roure, feeling somewhat uneasy about the candle carried by one of the acolytes, said quietly to this little Indian: "Take care; the Bishop is sitting on the powder-barrel." Unfortunately, the Bishop heard the remark, and, without any explosion, rose hastily, and so ruined his mitre, forgetting that there was no room for it except between the rafters. If Father Roure had not been so very particular, Mgr. Clut would have continued to enjoy very religiously the singing of the angels' hymn by the Indians. Their voices, he declared, were like a living organ. Perhaps they made up "full consort to the angelic symphony." What Milton wrote in his Nativity hymn was:

"And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time;
And let the bass of heaven's deep organ blow."

Father Roure could not but maintain that anyone else, in that stifling atmosphere, would have felt a little alarmed on noticing the candle of caribou suet softening, and leaning—not towards the side of mercy—in the hands of the boy at the Bishop's feet.

The cabin which he found at Fond du Lac was Father Pascal's ordinary residence for two years, until another cabin took its place. On one occasion, he wrote to Mgr. Clut: "Is there any place on earth more solitary than Fond du Lac? It seems the last outpost of the world, the *Ultima Thule*. The silence is terrible. What days I spend here! If I had not the Blessed Sacrament, and the holy image of our Lady of Lourdes, I should think myself in a prison cell. But I do not mind. I have no time to feel lonesome: there is plenty of work. I am only saying that solitude will always be the portion of the missionary in this place. For my part, I remain in good spirits. I sing a great deal; in fact, sometimes almost loud enough to blow off the roof, which sags already."

The singer at Fond du Lac had not the advantage of a chorus, like the chanters of *Vive le Nord* at Ile à la Crosse.

Twice a year—in winter on snow-shoes, in summer by canoe—Father Pascal went his 160 miles to Chipewyan, for retreat and confession. He used to say that he had plenty of time for the examination of conscience when going, and for the penance on the way back. For seven years these visits to the Nativity Mission were the only change from the monotonous solitude of his own mission. But in that solitude he found help. In his last years Bishop Pascal related how, in a day of great distress, at Fond du Lac, he had knelt leaning his head on the altar where the sacramental presence dwelt, and how from that communion of thought with our Blessed Lord he rose up as relieved, refreshed, and renewed in spirit, as if his bodily ears had heard the words of cheer. Many indeed are the missionary priests ready to say that their own experience in times of trial would be enough to prove that they have with them in their solitude, in real presence, the divine solitary of the holy Eucharist.

All priests remain attached in heart to their first mission. If their first spiritual children are also the children of their pain, they love them all the more. Mgr. Pascal was always attached to his Indians of Fond du Lac. His thoughts went back with special affection to those along with whom he had suffered in the winter of 1877-78. No caribou came. The hunters sent to a distance found none,

and never returned. All around the mission there was deep distress. "Fasting" is what the Indians call suffering prolonged hunger. The missionary fasted too. He served out all his provisions, as sparingly for himself as for others, and swept his floor to save for himself the crumbs or dust of the dried meat on which he had to live.

It must be said that the Caribou-eaters, on their part, never forgot their devoted missionary. "When Father Pascal spoke to us," said one of them, "we saw his heart." An old half-breed, Louison Robillard, said: "Father Pascal was like one of ourselves. He was not proud. He preached so well that he made us love God in spite of ourselves. And with all that, he knew how to down the caribou. That is a great point here among the Indians. Sometimes he came with us on hunting expeditions. When the caribou came within range, then he fixed his spectacles, and bang, bang! He never missed. Oh, everybody loved that priest."

In 1881 Father Pascal was placed at the head of the mission at Chipewyan. In 1890, he was asked to accompany to St Boniface a poor Brother who had become melancholy mad. He learned at St Boniface that the Bishops of Western Canada, then one ecclesiastical province, had recommended in 1888 the division of the diocese of St Albert, and that Rome had approved, and that he himself was to be the Bishop for the new division, the Vicariate of Saskatchewan. There was no secular priest in those countries at that date. Father Pascal, in his humility, used to say that it was a man out of his mind who had brought him to a place on the Episcopal Bench.

But this missionary Bishop did much good work for the Church—for his Indians and the immigrants—in the Vicariate of Saskatchewan, which became in 1907 the diocese of Prince Albert. The new civil prairie provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta had been formed in 1905. One of Bishop Pascal's pastoral addresses—on the sacredness of marriage—was much appreciated by Bishops at a distance, for it is not in the Wild West alone that the subject is of importance. In 1910 the diocese of Prince Albert was subdivided, when Father Charlebois, O.M.I., was placed as Bishop over the Vicariate of Keewatin, on the west shore of Hudson Bay, and extending north not only to Boothia Peninsula, but to the Pole.

Bishop Pascal's health, which had been failing for some time previous to 1920, did not allow him to return, as he wished, from his last visit *Ad Limina Apostolorum*, to die

and be buried in the midst of his own flock. The end of his devoted labours came in France on July 12, 1920. He was lamented, both in the new cathedral, which he had built in Prince Albert, and among his Caribou-eaters, farther north. His successor, a Manitoban, the son of Judge Prud'homme, is an old friend of the Oblate Fathers. He is a Roman Doctor of Divinity and Canon Law. He was ordained priest in 1904 by Archbishop Langevin, O.M.I., with whom he lived for many years as his devoted secretary, and editor of *Les Cloches de Saint Boniface*, one of the Archbishop's successful literary ventures.

Another Bishop whose career, like that of Mgr. Pascal, we may connect with the Caribou-eaters, is Mgr. Breynat, who always keeps his word when he says, "Foi de Mangeur de Caribou."

Gabriel Joseph Elias Breynat was born in the diocese of Valence on Rosary Sunday, October 6, 1867. He studied classics in the Little or Petty Seminary of Valence. (We always speak of Petty and Grand Juries.) He passed for his *Baccalauréat* in Lyons and Aix. Then he studied in the Grand Seminary of Romans. The name of the town is familiar to some of us, because the Oblate Fathers were once in charge of that seminary, one of them being the then youthful Father Rambert, who was afterwards for many years Superior of the scholasticate at Autun. Romans is a familiar name to a far larger number of persons, who remember that it was there that Gambetta uttered his famous declaration that the enemy of the Republican form of Government was *le cléricalisme*.

From Romans Seminary, Abbé Gabriel Breynat joined the Oblates. He had come under the influence of that devoted Valence missionary, Mgr. Clut. On February 21, 1892, Father Breynat was ordained priest by Mgr. Grouard, at the new scholasticate in Liège. On April 7, 1892, along with that Bishop, and Fathers Gouy and Dupé, he sailed from Liverpool. On June 16, he was at Chipewyan, and in the middle of September, 1892, at Fond du Lac. He was to spend nine years with the Caribou-eaters.

He began by learning their language from their resident missionary, Father de Chambeuil, who had put in eleven years in that post since Father Pascal left. Like nearly every one of the missionaries of Athabaska-Mackenzie, Father de Chambeuil may say with St Paul, "*Stigmata Domini Jesu in corpore meo porto.*" Rheumatisms, though most painful, may not leave their marks. But King Frost



MGR. BREYNAT, VICAR APOSTOLIC OF MACKENZIE

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upon the lakes deals very severely with hand and foot and face. Father de Chambeuil, when frost-bitten on a particular occasion, in 1888, lost not only the skin of his nose, but one nostril. Nevertheless, he remarks that it was owing to the special intervention of Mary Immaculate that he was not frozen to death. His dogs did perish of cold in that journey. And as for himself, his hands and wrists were so deeply frost-bitten that for a time there seemed to be no hope of their healing. In his second winter at Fond du Lac, this worthy priest wrote: "Then, again, I am often hungry. This is my second dolour. But I do not forget that I am serving the mission of our Blessed Lady of the Seven Dolours."

Father de Chambeuil had many bad characters, relapsing sinners, in his flock. In spite of delicate health, he laboured hard for their conversion, trying to put the fear of God in their hearts, and to direct the public opinion of the tribe against them. He taught the language to Father Breynat for eight months, after which he was able to leave him alone.

This new missionary of the Caribou-eaters, in the first letter which reached him from home, was told of the death of his father. The next brought him word of the death of both mother and sister. There remained only his elder brother, the Abbé Joseph Breynat. The Indians, seeing Father Breynat in tears after such news, brought him some marten-skins as offerings for Masses for the repose of the souls of his relations, and the spokesman said, "Now that you are an orphan, we will take the more care of you."

The same post which had brought the bad news brought also a kind letter from Mgr. Grouard, inviting Father Breynat to the Nativity Mission for the retreat, February 10-17. During this first of his winter journeys, Father Breynat, in the open air day and night, had constant experience of from 45 to 55 centigrade degrees below zero. He took with him an Indian boy, eighteen years of age. An obliging half-breed, Germain Mercredi, also accompanied him for the first twenty-four hours, in order to teach him how to use the snow-shoes on a long journey. Three miserable dogs drew a sled with caribou meat for the orphans at Chipewyan. To prevent blisters, Father Breynat, as advised, had put round his feet caribou-skin, inside the woollen wrappings, over which the moccasins are worn. But in severe frost, perspiration is frozen quickly, if not absorbed by woollen material. On the very first day of

the journey, Father Breynat felt as if a needle were piercing his right foot. Germain found that the great toe was frozen white and hard, and he rubbed it with snow to bring back the blood. The next day, the priest and the young Indian, being left to themselves, continued their journey, taking it in turns to march in front of the dogs, or to guide the sled from behind. In the evening they could make only a very poor fire, and their dogs howled with the cold. Whilst working in the deep snow to make a shelter for the night, Father Breynat burst a blister formed on his toe, which was once more frost-bitten. The Indian tried the usual remedy, but he only got his own hands frost-bitten, leaving the whole of Father Breynat's foot to the same fate. To make the best of a dangerous case, the voyagers buried themselves in their snow camp, and tried to sleep. Shooting pains kept Father Breynat awake all night.

Very early next morning, they were afoot once more. At noon they reached an Indian camp at Caribou Point. The Indians there wrapped up Father Breynat's foot in hare-skins, but they told him he would have to lose the toe: it was already festering. Still he went on for five days more, his nerves seeming to contract, and his bones to leave their sockets, under his desperate efforts to keep marching. In the evening of the seventh day, he and his companion reached Rocky Point, forty miles from their destination. That was a distance which might be done in one day by starting very early. But during the night a blizzard arose, and the snow fell so thickly that it was impossible to see any point towards which they might direct their steps. They took shelter in a wood for the two days that the blizzard lasted.

When Father Breynat tried once more to go forward, he fell to the ground as if his right leg was no longer his own. From the second day of this part of the journey, he had lightened the sled by parting with the caribou meat, and trusted himself to be helped along by his young companion and the dogs. But he had never been able to remain more than a few minutes in the sled, so intense was the cold. Now there was nothing else to be done. So the Indian covered up the priest in the sled with the blankets for both, and with fir branches and snow, and thus led and carried him slowly for two whole days. Meanwhile, there was alarm at Nativity. Some Indians had arrived at the mission, after braving the blizzard. They told Mgr. Grouard they had seen Father Breynat's tracks as far as Rocky Point; after that there was not one trace;



TRAVELLING BY DOG-SLED

he and his companion must have lost their way, and have been frozen to death in the snow-storm.

For three days there was great distress among the Oblates and the Grey Nuns, whilst the Fort Chipewyan Indians, at Bishop Grouard's request, searched Lake Athabaska in vain. At last, the Bishop from a rocky outpost saw a covered-up sled coming on very slowly, the dogs looking half dead. Said the Bishop to himself, stifling his sobs, "Paulazé (the young Indian) is bringing me a corpse!" But in a minute or two Father Breynat showed his head out of the blankets. "*Deo gratias!*" said the Bishop, who quickly jumped from ice block to ice block, and carried the young missionary, to lay him down on the floor of the mission-house, by the fireside. The Indian bandage was taken off the foot. "Ha!" said Mgr. Grouard, "it will have to come off; but it will be all right, thank God; it is nothing." And he felt so thankful and happy that he lighted his pipe, which he had not lighted during their three days of prayer. The traveller's great toe was black and gangrened. Brother Ancel found an old razor. Whoever had brought it into such a latitude? He took off the toe at the metatarsal joint, although he had no chloroform for the patient's head, nor cocaine for his foot. Father Breynat, having youth and courage and religion on his side, seems to have gained by the loss of his toe. During his career at Fond du Lac he visited Chipewyan no less than forty-five times, and in twenty-three of these marched on snow-shoes.

The great need at Fond du Lac was another house-chapel, somewhat decent, and large enough for the congregation. Father Brémond, who spent three years with Father Breynat at Fond du Lac, has left us a description of the "new" hut, built by Father Pascal, in which Father de Chambeuil lived for twelve years, and Father Breynat for three.

"Come in," he wrote. "Yes, do pick up your soutane. Was there ever such a filthy floor since the world began? I think all the dirt plastered on the roof has come down inside. Such a hut! It lets in the light everywhere, but it keeps out no rain, and no frost. For three weeks I have been making a sort of mortar with mud and hay, and have been trying to stop up the holes and chinks in the roof and the walls. You should see me in the middle of this pastoral occupation."

A better house was built by Father Breynat, with the help of Brothers Hémon and Leroux. It was 72 feet by 22. The sawmill at Nativity Mission was what made

possible the building of this new house-chapel, which will serve for a long time to come. The first Christmas therein seemed to bring all heaven before the eyes of the many Indians who assembled for that high festival. It mattered not to them that every morning the missionary found that his breathing had frozen his beard to his blanket. They thought themselves in a magnificent new house of prayer, and the Crib in particular drew their intense admiration. Paper, moss, and young fir trees made a very good grotto. The figure of the divine Child inspired devotion and pity.

After the new chapel, came an attempt to make a garden. The ground on which the mission stood was all of rocks and sand. Some earth was gathered up in handfuls from where it had found rest between the rocks on stormy days. Mixed with clay and sand, it formed a sort of soil in which to plant seed potatoes. But success was very slow in coming. The first attempt was rewarded by only a very small crop, for there was a nipping frost, both in June and in August.

In May, 1899, Father Breynat, in a letter to the Rev. Mother of the Visitation Convent at Valence, told of some of his experiences at Fond du Lac. "My Caribou-eaters are very good Christians. And they have kept their natural good qualities, having had very little intercourse with white folk. But they lead a very hard life. They are often in great misery. This year in particular you would have pitied them. From last autumn until now they have been starving. Both caribou and fish have failed them. Here we were fortunate in catching great quantities of fish under the ice. I myself took 6,000 fishes of one sort or another. I was able, therefore, to save the life of some persons and to give help to very many. It was pitiful to see the poor Indians coming here from all parts, driven by hunger. They came on foot a journey of two or three days, or more, in a most rigorous winter, and sometimes without having even a mouthful to eat during all that journey. They were all more or less frost-bitten, hands and feet and face. The little food that we were able to give them was enough to make them forget their sufferings, and it was very touching to see them so devoutly thanking God for enabling them to revisit the house of prayer. So far, only one death has been reported—that of a lame boy, who had to be left to his fate in the camp."

During that same famine, Father Breynat saved the life of another little boy. An old Indian named Gabriel arrived at the mission to beg assistance for some families camping

at Black Bay, Lake Athabaska. He told how his young nephew had come with him part of the way. They had undertaken the four days' journey with only half a jack-fish for their food. All the dogs at the camp had been eaten. The uncle, who was in the last stages of exhaustion himself, explained how he had left the boy behind, beside a wood, thirty-five miles westward of Fond du Lac. He had made him a shelter of willows, and had gathered many branches for him to keep the fire burning. Father Breynat soon set off in his dog-sled. A storm delayed him for a whole day. When he was able to start again, he found himself amid so many islands and headlands, all exactly alike in their snow garments, that he began to despair of finding the place vaguely described by Gabriel. At last he saw where, under the blue sky, the crows were flying up and down over the same spot. The boy must be there—dead or dying. The dogs were urged forward. The poor little fellow was found crouching over the embers, his teeth chattering, his clothes in rags. He was just able to lift his head with a little smile of gratitude on his haggard features, and to say, "Oh, Father, I am so hungry! I knew you would not let me die." Father Breynat gave him a small quantity of fish-broth. To feed a person in such a case would be to kill him, as everybody knows well in the North. The boy was made warm and comfortable, and was brought along in the sled. From time to time he kept repeating, "Father, I am hungry." As often as was prudent, Father Breynat stopped to make a little fire, and to melt another dose of the broth, and so he brought the boy in safety the next day to Fond du Lac.

If one were to ask Mgr. Breynat to-day what missionary duty in old days he liked best, he would probably reply, "Visiting the hunting-lodges." The missionaries find that "there is a great deal of human nature in men," even in Red Men. At the trading posts or forts the Indian is very busy with his bartering; he is very proud of being able to buy so many useful or useless things; he is not altogether free from human respect; and he makes himself in some measure a poor imitation of the Palefaces. But in his cabin rude, in his native woods, he is all attention to the Blackrobe, whose coming to him there to rest by the fire in his poor wigwam is by itself proof enough of unselfish devotedness. Moreover, there are many Indians who never visit the trading posts, and those the priest must seek out and visit, no matter how great the distance from any missionary station. It is precisely in the Indian camps

that the man of prayer has most influence for good. As soon as he arrives, he has to be magistrate, notary, and doctor, as well as priest. He begins, however, by a religious retreat in due form. He chooses the least objectionable lodge for a chapel, reserving one corner of it for his own blankets. Of course, dogs and harness, and various utensils, and dried meat, etc., have to be cleared out. When a little altar has been set up, the tom-tom calls the Indians to the opening of the mission. For the evening devotions, hymns, rosary, sermon, night prayers, and perhaps baptisms. Every morning there will be morning prayers, Mass, hymns, and sermon. At midday catechism for the children, and a special instruction for all. On one day, these religious exercises are omitted, while the missionary visits the sick. Every day he hears confessions, and tries to settle disputes. After some days, all who are judged worthy receive Holy Communion every day. It is often possible to erect a great mission cross, at the foot of which the good Indians, who may again pass or rest in the same place, will be sure to pray. The mission is generally brought to a close because there is nothing more to eat in the camp. The Blackrobe's provisions have been the first to go; the common stock disappears next, and then the hunters take to the woods, and the missionary returns home, fasting on the way, looking wretchedly worn and thin when he arrives, but feeling happy for having done and suffered something for Christ's sake. It has happened sometimes that a pre-arranged mission of this kind never took place. The missionary arrived, in due course, at the rendezvous, after a fatiguing journey of several days, but he found no Indians. Famine had broken up the camp. In such circumstances, wonderful at times was the providential preservation of the missionary's own life.

In a little journal kept at Fond du Lac may be read these lines: "On the morrow of All Saints' Day, 1895, I started for the promised visit to the camps to the north of this mission. Thirty-five days of travelling. Much hardship from the weather, but much consolation among the Indians. Many confessions, some of good old women, who, on account of the great distance, had not seen the priest for a long time. Some first confessions also, and some of old backsliders who yielded because the Heavenly Hunter had pursued them so very far."

The successors of Father Breynat at Fond du Lac—viz., Fathers Laffont, Bocquené (who lately had to fight in the European War), and Riou—have continued the good work.



CLERICAL COSTUME IN WINTER

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At present the 500 Caribou-eaters of that place are well-instructed, devout Catholics. Father Riou has brought home to young and old amongst them the teachings of Pope Pius X about frequent Communion. Those Indians can read also for themselves—syllabic characters—having been taught by the missionaries. Only one man objected to learn, but he gave his own reason. "I have a mind," said he. "If I knew how to read, the others would say that what I tell them is got out of a book. Now they all know that I find it here," and he tapped his forehead.

When Father Breynat was leaving his Indians of Fond du Lac in 1902, to be consecrated Bishop, they showed their gratitude for all that he had done for them. He was especially touched by the behaviour of Michael, an incorrigible sorcerer and scandalous sinner, and a very aged woman, known as Petite Flèche (Little Arrow). The last time Father Breynat had met Michael, he said to him: "I shall never see you again, for I am going away altogether. But you may bear in mind that no one has caused me so much pain as you. You have made your Father's heart bleed." And he refused the sorcerer's hand—the greatest of affronts. Not long after this Michael came to the priest's house, into which he had always refused to put his foot before, though he had often been at the fort. When Father Breynat saw him, he asked what was the matter. Was anybody sick? "I am sick, Father," said he; "and my heart is in a bad way. Since I saw you in the camp, when you would not touch my hand, I am always thinking of your words. I am ashamed. The Blackrobe has always been so kind to me, and is he going away with pain caused by me? The water was always coming in my eyes. I seemed to have no mind. I cared for nothing. When I went hunting, I was not thinking of the caribou, but of you. Wandering in the woods, I kept saying rosaries to beg God to tell me how to obtain your forgiveness. I was like that for several days, when suddenly it came into my mind that I ought to be converted, and to yield at last to all your good words. So I set out, and here I am. I want to go to confession."

"Thanks be to God and to the blessed Virgin," said the priest. "Your words make me very happy, Michael."

The sorcerer made his confession, and with abundance of tears. Tears are very rare with Indian men, though the women weep freely enough. The sorcerer then said: "Leave a little paper for the Father who will come here, telling him I may receive Holy Communion at Easter, if I

persevere until then. I know I am not worthy of the heavenly bread, but I intend to live well in future." Father Breynat explained that Michael, although not worthy, stood in such need of God's grace that he would be admitted to Holy Communion without delay. "I hope," said the priest, "my trust in your good dispositions will never cause me any regret." The penitent sorcerer said: "All is ended, Father. Every time that the man of prayer writes to you from here, he will say, 'Michael is a good Christian.'" Father Breynat gave Michael his first Communion the next day. After a long, fervent thanksgiving, Michael said to his son, fifteen years of age: "I have always given you bad example, and you have followed it. You too will have to go to confession. From this day, if you do not change your life, I will make you. Now, go fetch the meat that we brought." In a few minutes the son came back with a sled, in which there was a good quantity of dried caribou meat. "I am giving it to you," said Michael to the missionary, "to prove that you have made me happy."

The other specially named member of the flock, Khaaze, or Little Arrow, was supposed to be 100 years of age. She lived at three days' distance from the mission. She sent her son to "touch the hand" of Father Breynat in her name, to say how sorry she was not to be able to go herself, and to give him a little bag of pounded meat for his journey. Two days later, the old squaw, a massive person, leaning very heavily upon a big stick, suddenly appeared inside Father Breynat's door. "Oh, grandmother!" said he, in accordance with etiquette, "how have you come? I was told you were not able to walk at all."

She laughed like a child, and with a laugh which moved every wrinkle in her old face. "Ah, my grandson!" said she, "I loved you too much to let you go without touching your hand myself."

"But how in the world did you come? Had you any dogs?"

"I am going to tell you all about that," said the old one, still laughing as she plopped down with all her weight on the floor, for the D  n   members of the fair sex always sit on the floor. "When the children were gone away, there remained only myself and my daughter Louise. The water was in my eyes as I was thinking that I was never to see you any more. Louise said to me, 'Mother, I am sorry to see you fretting. Let us try to go to the mission. We have only two poor old dogs, and you are very heavy, but

I am strong, and I will pull along with the dogs. I myself also wish to touch the hand of the little man of prayer before he goes.' I said to my daughter, 'Very well!' So she got the sled ready, and I put our provisions together. Then we started. And whenever the pulling was too hard for the dogs and my daughter, I tried to walk for a while, with the help of two sticks. And now here we are." Still laughing heartily, she continued: "You see how much I love you. But it is not trading that brings me to the fort. I want to go to confession. To-morrow you will give me the bread of heaven, and I will go away content."

Papal Bulls dated July 31, 1901, made the missionary of Fond du Lac Titular Bishop of Adramyttium (north of the modern Smyrna, and south-east of Mount Ida), and Vicar Apostolic of Mackenzie and Yukon. The news reached him at the time of the passage of the caribou, a very important season. He remained at his post until after the Epiphany, 1902. He then left in a dog-sled for St Albert (740 miles), which this new Lord Bishop reached in as poor a condition as the meanest Christian that ever lived, says a local chronicler. Probably Mgr. Breynat has never seen Fond du Lac in the twenty years since then, for it is not in his Vicariate, and it is not on such "North Road" as exists in those high latitudes. He was consecrated at St Albert on April 6, 1902, by Mgr. Grouard, the two assistant or co-consecrating Bishops being Mgr. Pascal and Mgr. Clut. The new Bishop took for motto the words *Peregrinari pro Christo*, which remind one of the Irish monks of the historic days. But the Bishop of the North Wind, as a friendly Protestant clergyman has called Mgr. Breynat, is accustomed to journeys compared with which the voyages and wanderings of the old Irish ascetics were only holiday trips. It has come to be said by the missionaries of the Vicariate, when they see a snow-storm in the winter, or high waves and falling trees in the summer: "The Bishop must be on his way; but he will be sure to arrive."

The life endured in the North, not for pelf, has strongly appealed to the minds and hearts of a number of Protestant traders or Government officials, whom Bishop Breynat has had the consolation of receiving into the Church.

The Mackenzie Vicariate was divided in 1908, Yukon being made a Prefecture Apostolic under Father Bunoz, O.M.I. The Vicariate Apostolic of Yukon, with which goes Northern British Columbia, was formed in 1917, and Father Bunoz was consecrated its Bishop by Archbishop

Casey (with Mgr. Legal and Mgr. Breynat) in Vancouver, on October 18, 1917.

In connection with the Caribou-eaters must be mentioned St Peter's Mission on Caribou, or Reindeer, Lake, to the south-east of Fond du Lac.

This mission, founded in 1847 by Father Taché, is within the present Vicariate of Keewatin. It is frequented by seven or eight hundred Caribou Indians. The territory is sandy and rocky, and grows but little firewood, so that the dozen missionaries serving it, in successive years, have always had a severe struggle for life against cold and hunger. The Indians were also very hard to convert, for they had not known the Catholic *coureurs des bois* or half-breeds. Only in 1875 was their chief converted, and in 1880 the whole tribe. And at the cost of what patient, persevering efforts! Father Gasté, who died in 1919, was the missionary of Reindeer Lake, 1861-1901. Of him Father Bonnard wrote: "I have always called Father Gasté the meek Moses of those indifferent Indians. Only his marvellous patience, gentleness, generosity, longsuffering, and perseverance could have won them over."

The following story has been recorded as marking the beginning of the conversion of the Indians of Reindeer Lake: On November 5, 1870, Father Gasté, with Brother Guillet as acolyte, said Mass for all deceased Oblates. As soon as the vested priest appeared, the people saw hovering over the credence table light clouds, as of smoke, in which appeared a human figure, smirched by fire, and wearing an expression of resignation in pain. On the breast was an Oblate Cross, round the throat a collar of white pearls, like a Roman collar. At the elevation, the figure became white and radiant; round the head was a halo which gave the clouds their silver lining. The figure followed attentively all the movements of the celebrant. After following also the last prayers over the catafalque, the apparition quietly and gracefully disappeared, looking like one comforted and bid to enter into joy. Nothing had been seen by the priest or acolyte. But when the priest was questioned by the people, he himself questioned many, and separately one from the other. And he found that the description given was that of Father Mestre, his novice-master at St Boniface. The post in February, 1871, brought to Father Gasté the first news of his death.

CHAPTER XIV

PEACE RIVER: THE BEAVER INDIANS

THE Peace River is the longest and broadest of the tributaries which combine to form the giant course of waters which may be called the Athabaska-Mackenzie. By one of its mouths, the Peace River discharges itself into Lake Athabaska, and by another into Slave River, which runs northward from Lake Athabaska. The Peace rises in the Rocky Mountains, and in its very beginnings is fed by the Finlay River, coming from Mount Finlay in the north, and the Parsnip River (droll name), rushing from the south, past Wolsley and the other "high rugged mountains." The Finlay and Parsnip join, or rather form, the Peace River in the neighbourhood of Mount Selwyn (as far as maps are concerned). From its source to its sea in Lake Athabaska the Peace measures, on account of its many long windings, 960 miles. Like the rivers which from the same watershed rush to the Pacific, the Peace River is very rapid and turbulent in its course eastward, and then northward, to the Arctic. Its blue and foaming water, forcing a way between high cliffs, passes Hudson's Hope and Fort St John in what is now Peace River Block, in the extreme east of British Columbia. Then, still very strong and deep, it becomes known at Fort Dunvegan, Peace River Landing, and Fort Vermilion, all in Alberta. At the landing it receives two tributaries from the south, Smoky and Heart rivers, and with them forms, as it races, a colossal checkboard of winding waters and islands and hillocks. Much farther east, and only 250 miles from Lake Athabaska, the Peace River is shattered into fragments and smoke in the cataracts called the Vermilion Falls.

We have been repeating place-names very familiar to the missionaries for many years. Fort Vermilion, Peace River Landing, and Dunvegan have had their resident missionaries for long (Vermilion from 1868). The posts called Hudson's Hope and Fort St John were visited from time to time. It is worth mentioning that in old days Fort Dunvegan was at a distance of 1,000 miles from one

who wished to travel from the present capital of Alberta, the modern city of Edmonton, which Father Lacombe and his fellow-missionaries knew as the Fort of the Prairies. From the five posts just mentioned, the missionaries visited the Indians in their various scattered camps.

Although winter is very severe in the Peace River country, the milder seasons last longer than in the regions farther north. Travelling westward towards the Rockies, one finds alternately rich prairie lands and luxuriant forests. The Chinook, a warm south-west wind from the Pacific, penetrates the passes of the mountain ranges, delays the freezing of the waters, and prevents the snow from lying long upon the plains. On the other hand, the mountains give considerable shelter from the cold north winds. At the present time, many Europeans are settling in the Peace River plains or the forest clearances. Or they are "getting in on the ground floor" by buying cheaply land of no value, for which they expect to receive high prices when it becomes "ripe for development" through the arrival of many settlers. The real settlers themselves turn their lands to good account as farms or as grazing ranches. The railway has now reached Peace River Landing; the days of hardship and famine are over in that country; but it was not ever thus. In the early days, if distress was frequent at Lake Athabaska, it was perpetual at Dunvegan, so very much more remote.

In the Peace River country our missionaries found representatives of three different Indian nations. There were many Crees, who are of the Algonquin nation. There were—in the service of the Hudson Bay Company—a few Iroquois, from Caughnawaga, near Lachine, on the banks of the St Lawrence. And there were considerable numbers of Beavers, who are of the Déné nation.

These Beavers or Castors (with whom we are here concerned) occupied mostly the upper reaches of the Peace River. There were some of them at Fort Vermilion, but their chief centre was farther west, and far to the south, where the company formed its chief trading post, Fort Dunvegan, and where the chief missionary post also was founded. The Beavers in the long ago were the lords of all the banks of that great river which once bore their own name. Numerous and proud, those Castor braves fought many a battle, on land and water, with their neighbours on the east, the Montagnais, and their neighbours on the south, the Crees. A day came when the war lords held a conference, and signed a treaty of peace, exchanging

calumets. The place of meeting was called Peace Point, and the Beaver River became the Peace River.

By the time the missionaries reached them, the Beavers were far down the slope of degradation. There had been 6,000 of them, their old people said. There were only 2,000 when Father Faraud went among them. At the present day, of the Beaver tribe there remain only a few old men, and some mixed breeds, who are more Cree, or Iroquois, or white, than Déné. The causes of their dying out have been various—intermarriages, the diseases brought among them by the whites, and the extermination of the animal from which they derive their name. That famous rodent was formerly very common in the Peace River country. Its flesh was food. As long as they could kill a beaver it did not matter that bear or moose was not to be had, and that there was no fish in the Peace River. The beaver's fur, glossy brown, or almost black, was valuable. An English Act of Parliament of 1638 forbade the use of any other material in the manufacture of hats. Of course, the beaver is found in the Old World, but every year in the eighteenth century, and in part of the nineteenth century, 200,000 beaver-skins were exported from America. As long as the Beaver Indians were left alone in their own country, they were never in want of food. They always took care to leave at least couples of the animals in the lodges or lairs. When the traders came, with their Cree and Iroquois servants, they gradually exterminated the beavers, in their haste to make fortunes by the furs. The beaver-skin was so common "in the market" that it was the standard of value in the North, and in talk such it remains, to some extent, even still, after the introduction of metal and paper money.

The missionaries consider that the Beaver Indians' perpetual delight in games of chance had much to do with the disappearance of that tribe. The love of gambling is so inveterate in the North that the missionaries were obliged to content themselves with the avoidance of superstition, and of long hours of play, and of extravagant stakes. In former times, when Indians "sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play," they were in no way inferior or superior to Monte Carlo. They were accustomed to stake everything they owned, and even their wives and children. There is a story of a Cree and a Sauteux, who played for their own scalps, each of them, in turn, losing and paying. Bishop Grouard one day saw a man making off with his gun, and he discovered that this Montagnais had first

forfeited his shirt, and then had staked the Bishop's gun. To a stranger, even nowadays, there seems something almost diabolical in the violent drumming, and shouting, and the bodily convulsions, which accompany the endeavour to hide, or to discover, in whose hand the knuckle-bone may be found. The Beavers used to spend days and nights in these games, even under snow and rain. The women—at least as lookers-on—were as fond of this folly as the men, and they neglected to keep the tents and clothing in proper repair. When, therefore, the gamesters sank to rest exhausted, they were unprotected against the weather, and pneumonia found among them many an unresisting victim.

The first missionary among the Beavers was Father Faraud. To reach them meant a very long and difficult journey up the Peace River from Lake Athabaska. It was a journey of 600 miles on snow-shoes in the winter season. And many a risk did Father Faraud run in his visits to the Beavers—risks of death from cold and hunger, to say nothing of the dangers on land or water, during such a journey of three weeks.

The Beavers had asked for a visit from the missionary, declaring that they wished to be taught the way to heaven. But Father Faraud was disappointed in them. He considered them deceitful and cowardly. They listened to his instructions in the daytime, but they went on with their games and superstitious practices during the night. They would not let their children be baptized, because the medicine-man (they said) would not be able to cure a baptized sick child. Father Faraud wrote to Mgr. Taché after a third visit to the Beavers: "What can be done for this tribe? I have spent many a sad night thinking of them. Our resources are so small. Shall we ever be able to settle among them? Or shall we be obliged to abandon them, giving them over to a reprobate sense?"

Becoming Vicar Apostolic, Father Faraud did not abandon the decaying tribe. In 1866, he went with Father Tissier to instal this young Father at Dunvegan, on the upper reaches of the Peace River, near British Columbia. Both returned to Fort Chipewyan for the consecration of Mgr. Clut in 1867. In the same year, that devout Lorrainer, Father Tissier, active and vigorous and zealous, "mounted guard" by himself at Fort Dunvegan. He held his ground, nearly always alone, until 1883. He had one flying visit from Father Lacombe, and three such visits from Father Collignon, during fifteen of those sixteen years. There

were five consecutive years during which he never saw a priest.

The first comrade sent to Father Tissier was Brother Thouminet, a brave old soldier, a model of religious discipline and punctuality, and most helpful to Father Tissier. He arrived at Dunvegan in 1877, but he was drowned on August 18, 1880, having slipped into the water from a shelving bank. The first priest to be stationed at Dunvegan, with Father Tissier, was Father Le Doussal. He spent there only the year 1880-81, when he wrote: "I have come into the stable of Bethlehem. The poverty of the missions at Great Slave Lake, and Lake Athabaska, and Fort Vermilion, is nothing compared with what we have to endure here."

Father Tissier in 1883 was suffering from a dreadful malady brought on by pushing the dog-sled for so many years. He had to go to hospital, and the nearest was at St Boniface on the Red River! He left Fathers Husson and Grouard as his successors at Fort Dunvegan, where he himself was greatly lamented by the poor Indians.

How many things Father Tissier might have written if he were not so fond of silence and the shade! One of his experiences is known, and may be told here. The winter of 1870-71 was very severe, even in Europe, as some survivors of the Franco-Prussian War still remember. A little before Christmas, Father Tissier, who had been without altar wine for some weeks, set off for Badger (or Carcajou) Point, on the Peace River, 400 miles from Dunvegan. His expected supply—to last two years—had been left there *en cache*, along with goods belonging to the Company. As often happened, the boats coming up the river had been stopped by the ice. Father Tissier had two dogs to his sled, which he pushed on from behind. He was accompanied by one of the Company's men, who was on the same errand as himself. Their journey took twelve days. While working at the *cache*, the Company's man, of course a helpful travelling companion, accidentally crushed Father Tissier's great toe. Yet the return journey had to be begun, Father Tissier still pushing his sled, now loaded. Coming upon thin ice, where the Chinook had blown, the travellers fell into the water. Father Tissier's feet were frost-bitten. There were still three days before they could reach the first Cree camp, which was at the meeting of the Peace and Battle Rivers. They arrived at length, the priest being heartily welcomed by those Catholic Indians. The great toe was blue, and the other toes seemed decomposing.

Father Tissier was in favour of a clean cut at once. But the Indians said: "No; you would die; our knives are no good, and we have no means of healing such a wound." So they boiled the inner bark of the red fir tree, and with repeated washing and poulticing, they saved Father Tissier's feet, and probably his life. As he would not be able to stand for some months, he advised the Hudson Bay man to continue his journey to Dunvegan. He himself remained with the Indians, in a family tent, on the large family hide. He had been only three weeks with the Crees when the whole camp was in the grip of famine. Not one original (or moose) in the woods, and even the hares had disappeared. Of course, there was not in all the camp a mouthful of food in reserve. The missionary's provisions, which were to have lasted for two years, quickly disappeared. Then the famine-stricken, including, of course, the priest, made such food as they could of hides and old garments. Some of the men remained barely able to keep the fires burning, round which the others huddled in the last extremity. Without being able to rise himself, Father Tissier, in a very weak voice, absolved and prepared a dying woman. The Indians asked him, "Will you allow us to eat her when she dies?" He consented, wondering in his own mind if he would be able to refuse his share.

But Divine Providence came to the relief of the afflicted, who had never prayed so well before. The last batch of hunters lay down in the woods in despair. Suddenly they heard a shot fired a long way off. They crawled in that direction and fired in reply. Another shot from their distant friends was a message of hope. The friends soon appeared, bringing four moose. They were told of the Blackrobe, sick and dying. Both groups of Crees soon reached Battle River, and there was food enough to save young and old, and all the camp, from dying of starvation. After some time Father Tissier was able to fasten on his snow-shoes once more, and he reached his mission at Fort Dunvegan on Holy Saturday (Easter Eve), 1871.

Father Husson was another apostle of the Beaver Indians. He was a great mission-builder, says his Bishop, Mgr. Grouard. He could always say with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "We labour, working with our own hands; and you yourselves know that these hands have furnished such things as were needful for me and for them that are with me." Nay, he counted as being "with him" the poor Indians to whom he preached. Like many another missionary, he built their churches, and sometimes he



THE MID-DAY REST

provided them with food. Father Husson, says Bishop Grouard, "is a voyager who was never drawn in a sled." He provided for the needs of his brethren and others, during the years 1895-1909, as procurator for the immense Vicariate of Athabaska-Mackenzie. This *brave entre les braves* was returning in July, 1880, from Lake Athabaska to his mission at Fort Vermilion on the Peace River, accompanied by Brother Regnier and two Indians. All four might have been singing cheerily, "Row, brothers, row; the stream runs fast," for, although the stream was against them, the wind was favourable, and their arms were strong, and game was within gunshot at frequent intervals. On a certain day they jumped ashore, tied up the canoe, and sat down to rest. In a little while the strong current suddenly, under their eyes, carried off the canoe, with all their provisions, their guns, blankets, cooking and other utensils, and part of their clothing, for the day was warm. They were shipwrecked, or marooned, without an ounce of victuals, at a distance of 160 miles from their destination. They had to walk in moccasins, through primeval forests in which only Indian instinct could find an issue. The party set out, invoking God and the blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate. On the second day the moccasins were worn out; it was the bare feet that trod the pebbles and the briars. Clouds of mosquitoes tormented the travellers. Hunger pinched them more and more. In their wearied sleep they dreamt of food and drink. Before they could taste, they awoke to the reality. The Indian guides, amid their sufferings, blasphemed, asking how the God invoked by the priest could have so abandoned them. For three days rain came down, so that the travellers had to walk in mud and mire. Some rivers had to be crossed. The one thing which, by some happy chance, Father Husson had brought out of the canoe was a hatchet. This he used to cut down trees, to serve as bridges over the narrow rivers. Coming to a broad river, he found a beavers' causeway or dam, or rather a portion of one, two feet under the water. From the bank to the causeway a sort of bridge was made. Over this rough and narrow erection, one after the other, with the help of a bough as a staff, the four travellers passed, between two yawning gulfs of wild water.

One evening, to their joy, they came upon the tracks of some Indian hunters. They followed the trail, but only to be disappointed. The hunters had themselves been without food for several days, some of them for a week.

But they were able to direct the new-comers to the right bank of the Peace River, and so to shorten their journey by one day. At last, on the seventh day, all in rags, bitten and bled by the mosquitoes, and so worn and wasted as almost to frighten each other, the travellers were welcomed by the poor Indians of Fort Vermilion.

After hearing many such reminiscences, we can but say, "Since we have all been bought with a great price, it was only just that it should be at no paltry cost that the Red Men were led forward into that Christian society where they are within reach of the copious redemption."

The Beaver Indians were not the easiest to convert, but the missionaries sometimes found consolation amongst them. In 1866, Bishop Faraud thus reported a visit to Fort St John, a post in which some of the Indians of Hudson's Hope also were occasionally to be found:

"The Beavers of Fort St John have suffered much. Of 1,800 there are only 800 left, and all are sick. Only half a dozen are well enough to go into the hunting-grounds. I heard that forty of them had spent the summer on a high platform, on the mountain side; I set out to visit them. After a long and toilsome ascent I found thirty of them lying in the shade of a willow. They were only skin and bone, having been reduced to live on wild fruits, of which there was no abundance. Their bodies were covered with ulcers, giving out an infectious odour of death. I asked them if they wished to be baptized. They replied, 'It is only for that we remain alive; we prayed to God to keep us alive until you could come.' After a short instruction, I baptized them all."

On October 26, 1894, Father Le Treste, who for eighteen years, from his centre at Dunvegan, travelled up hill and down dale, by water flowing or frozen, through the valley of the upper Peace River, reported as follows: "I have visited Fort St John, where I found also many of the Hudson's Hope Indians. Never before have I found the Beavers in such good dispositions. They have proved to me that they are now aware that they have not been sent into this world simply to eat moose meat. They have very willingly allowed their children to be baptized. I baptized also one very old man, and five other adults. Nearly all the tribesmen asked me to beg the Great Priest to send me not for a few days only, but to stay with them altogether."

In 1903, Father Le Treste transferred the Dunvegan Mission (St Charles) to Spirit River, where there has been a

resident priest ever since. Fort St John, Hudson's Hope (both in the modern Peace River Block), and Grande Prairie were the missions served from Dunvegan. Grande Prairie is now being colonized, and it has two or three priests, and an Oblate Brother.

Fort Vermilion, of which we have already spoken, is also becoming a white settlement. The Sisters of Providence (of Montreal) teach school there, and they are in charge of an orphanage at Peace River Landing.

CHAPTER XV

FORT RESOLUTION: THE YELLOW-KNIVES

THOSE Indians called the Yellow-knives, in the region of Great Slave Lake, are outside the bounds of any organized Canadian territory. Their sub-Arctic fastnesses are in those immense "North-West territories" which as yet have no local name, and are kept in awe (if there be need) only by the North-West Mounted Police. At Great Slave Lake, among the Yellow-knives, we are in the very heart of the Mackenzie Apostolic Vicariate. St Joseph's Mission, at Fort Resolution, is the principal mission of the Vicariate, and if the missionary Bishop, Mgr. Breynat, could be said to have a see or a residence, it would be Fort Resolution. The mission was founded in 1858, on the left of the delta of the Slave River, on the south of Great Slave Lake. From St Joseph's Mission, looking northwards, one sees nothing but the waves of the lake, which is at its broadest (about sixty-five miles) just there. Towards the north-west, if the eye could carry so far, it would traverse 100 miles of water, to reach the great outpouring of the lake which makes the Mackenzie. In a north-easterly direction, the wild duck, flying over this inland sea—larger than all Wales—will light upon a great bay, which stretches out towards the Pole a threatening or friendly arm, eighty miles long. Due east of Fort Resolution, the bays and windings of the Great Slave Lake present quite a different scene from that on the west. The west of the lake is one wide open world for all the storms that blow. On the east, its various bays and inlets are no longer regular, wide, and sweeping. They meander and twist, and are narrowed into straits, and their surface is broken by a number of islets and hillocks, which make this eastern side of the lake look varied and picturesque. In the west, one is on the wide, wide sea. In the east, a labouring boat may find shelter.

The winding banks of the lake are far from the same in their appearance. On the south, they are well wooded, and slope gently to the water's edge. On the north, they are a chaotic mass of granite rocks, sometimes veritable

mountains, the work of the ancient upheavals which prevented the inland seas from returning to the parent ocean. In these northern rocks are visible veins of quartz, which will one day bring a Klondike rush of prospectors. The rocky islands of the north arm, and of the eastern division of the lake, are of great beauty: verdant pine trees crown their granite heads, and foaming wavelets play about their feet.

The whole length of the lake, from west to east, is 250 miles. It is fed by no less than twenty-five known tributaries, whatever may be the number of its subterranean sources. The western waves, coming chiefly from Slave River, are rather muddy; the eastern waters, supplied by the streams from the Barren Lands, are wonderfully clear. But fish are plentiful all over what has been called the Canadian Baikal. The forests to the west of the lake are the home of the bear and the moose; on the steppes to the east of the lake the lichens every winter attract herds of reindeer.

Great Slave Lake (called by the Indians Ttchou T'ouè, Great Lake of the Breasts) owes its English name to the early explorers—Samuel Hearne in 1772, Peter Pond in 1780—who found upon its bank the Indian tribe called Slaves. They are said to have been at times slaves of the Crees. This tribe has since been pushed farther north, with the exception of a little group, which tries to make a living at the mouth of the Hay River, in the south-west of the lake. In our own day, there lived and died at Great Slave Lake a noble-minded Englishman, Dr. J. F. Rymer, a medical practitioner, who devoted himself to the service of the poor Indians, and was the friend and benefactor of the missionaries. He was the son of Alderman Rymer, of Croydon, in England, and great-grandson of a surgeon in Nelson's navy.

At Great Slave Lake there are three Catholic missions, forming pretty nearly an isosceles triangle—viz., at Fort Resolution, Hay River, and Fort Rae (north arm). A look at the map will show what a waste of waters, or of "icy mountains" (such as Heber hymned), separates those missions not only from all the rest of the world, but even from each other. Fort Resolution (St Joseph's Mission) is for the benefit of the tribe called Yellow-knives; Hay River (St Anne's) for the Slaves; Fort Rae (St Michael's) for the Dog-ribs. From these three central missions, the Oblate priests visit all the bays and forests of their territory, not forgetting Old Fort Reliance in the far east of Great Slave Lake.

At Fort Resolution there are some Montagnais, who came from Lake Athabaska. There are also some Dog-ribs. But three-fourths of the Indian population are Yellow-knives, or Copper Indians. These Indians call themselves Tratsan Ottiné, the Copper People. They used to say that they were descended from the first man and a wood-hen, which was turned into a woman during her sleep. This knowing woman brought her children into a country where there was a yellow metal. This she showed them how to make into sharp knives for cutting up the reindeer. As a matter of fact, the first explorers found these Indians in possession of long copper knives, which had been made as hard as steel by being steeped for many hours in boiling reindeer blood. The Coppermine River (discovered by Hearne) and the Yellow-knife River tell their tale. The first runs northward from the Barren Lands to the Arctic Ocean (Coronation Gulf). The second, taking its source in nearly the same place, flows southward into Great Slave Lake. Near the sources of both rivers, and also at various points in their course, copper is found on the surface. The sons of the wild wood-hen (or was she a partridge ?) have so far kept possession of their old hunting-grounds at the head of the Coppermine, and along the banks of the Yellow-knife, and it is from those grounds they arrive twice a year at Fort Resolution, bringing their furs and their reindeer meat.

The religious history of the Yellow-knife Indians has been a very happy one since the day in 1852 when Father Faraud first went amongst them. He was received at Great Slave Lake with unfeigned delight. One Indian said to him: "Look at my white hairs, and see how my body is bent towards the earth. I have often begged God on high to let me live to see his praying man. Now you are here. This last winter, every day seemed to me a month. At every rising sun I thanked God that I saw another day. I was sick and sorrowful, and I said to the great Father on high, 'Last year some of our men saw the Blackrobe, and he said to them, "Tell the old men that I forbid them to die, because I want to see them all." You, my Father of heaven, will not let me disobey the priest.' And so it is. Now at last I see you, before I go into the ground. I know you bring a water which makes the heart clean and new. Before you go away you will pour it over me, and then I shall die content."

Father Faraud and his successors at Fort Resolution were therefore able to rejoice in the success of their efforts to



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bring home the Gospel of God's grace to those who had sat in darkness and the shadow of death. But, of course, they had their hours of trial and sorrow. There are relapsing sinners everywhere; yet among the Yellow-knives they are at length renewed again to repentance. Many zealous and entirely well-meaning persons will think it strange that the Catholic missionaries should consider the preaching for twenty years at Fort Resolution of a Protestant clergyman to be also one of their trials. But Christianity ought to mean the Church, and the Church to mean unity. However, although at one time there were some pure Indians, and some of half-Scottish descent, who were counted as Protestants at Fort Resolution, the natives of the place are all Catholics now. The resident Protestant minister was withdrawn many years ago.

Fathers Faraud and Grandin were our first missionaries at this post. But they were only visitors. Those who afterwards made a fixed residence there, and brought the mission to its present condition, were Fathers Grollier, Eynard, Gascon, Dupire, Joussard, Brémond, Frapsauce, Mansoz, Laity, Bousso, Duport, Falaize, and Trocellier. Of these apostles of the Yellow-knives, Fathers Gascon and Dupire were those whose anxieties and sorrows were the most pitiful and the most prolonged. Of Father Dupire, that lively Breton from Pontivy in Morbihan, the time has not yet come to speak. He is on the mission since 1877, the date of his arrival at Fort Resolution. But the burdens of the North seem to sit very lightly upon those sturdy shoulders of his. The snows may have tinged his trimmed beard; but his cheerful face, his stentorian voice in sermon or in song, and his firm and rapid step all about the banks of Great Slave Lake, give ample proof that prolonged fastings, forced marches through the forest, nights spent in a blizzard on the lake, and unexpected plunges into icy water are only trifling incidents in the routine of the courageous missionaries of the North.

Of Father Zephyrin Gascon (1826-1914) we should like to speak at some length. This Canadian priest was a curate at Verchères, near Montreal, in 1857, when he heard Mgr. Taché preach on the needs of the new diocese of St Boniface. He followed the Bishop into the North-West, and was sent by him, on June 2, 1859, to Great Slave Lake. Father Grollier had arrived at Fort Resolution in 1858 as assistant to Father Eynard. But the zealous Protestant, Archdeacon Hunter, soon passed through, on his way northward down the Mackenzie. Father Grollier thought

it his duty to follow him, and he succeeded in getting passage on one of the Company's barges, and made his way even to Fort Good Hope, near the Arctic Circle, where he afterwards closed his wonderful career. To fill his place, Father Gascon was sent to Great Slave Lake, which he reached on August 12, 1859. According to the rules and regulations of those primitive days, Father Eynard was to be his novice master. Mgr. Taché, the Bishop and Religious Superior, apologizing for sending a novice so far away, wrote: "As one of my councillors has remarked, Father Gascon is no novice in virtue." His noviciate, such as it was, lasted seventeen months. Of all that time, he spent only 147 days with Father Eynard. During the rest of the more than 500 days, both novice and master were away visiting the missions depending upon St Joseph's Mission, Fort Resolution—viz., Salt River, Big Island, Forts Rae, Simpson, Liard, and Halkett. On the feast of the Epiphany, 1861, having at length made time for a retreat, Father Gascon became a professed Oblate, pronouncing his perpetual vows before Father Eynard.

The Liard River is a great tributary of the Mackenzie, which it reaches from the Rocky Mountains in the south-west. Father Gascon was the first priest to carry the Gospel tidings into the region of the Liard. In 1860 he went first of all as far as Fort Simpson, which is at the confluence of the Liard and Mackenzie. The bold voyager had found great difficulty in getting so far. A local official of the Hudson Bay Company had refused him a passage on the barges, because a Protestant minister was considered to have the prior claim. Father Gascon somehow managed to get a birch-bark canoe, with three men. On this he sailed over Great Slave Lake and down the broad Mackenzie, pursuing the barges, and amazing his Protestant rival and the Company's officer by arriving at Fort Simpson on August 26, 1860. Father Grollier, back from Fort Good Hope (530 miles), met him there, in order to arrange a plan of campaign. "*Deo gratias!*" said he with radiant face, when he saw the canoe-man come; "we shall save the Fort Liard Indians for the Church."

Father Gascon pushed on to Fort Liard, which is at a great distance—near the present boundaries of Yukon and British Columbia. He arrived on September 4, three days in advance of the minister. On three different occasions Father Gascon made that same round journey, of about 580 miles, between Resolution and Liard. He made two attempts to go farther than Fort Liard, and to visit Fort

Halkett, a place almost inaccessible by reason of rugged mountains, rapids, canyons, and whirlpools. Some Indians of the Rocky Mountains, of the Sékanais and Bad People tribes, used to bring their furs to Fort Halkett, but the place was abandoned by the Company shortly after the date of which we are writing. Father Gascon, in his second attempt, succeeded in reaching Fort Halkett, but he found only a few Indians there. Of his first attempt he has left us the following account:

“After two days up the river from Fort Liard, in our canoe, we got into the Fort Halkett River, rightly called Strong Current. [This is really the Liard River itself, though it has been given a special name from its source to the point where it receives the Fort Nelson River from the south.] It is very dangerous, narrow, and full of rapids. The Company’s barges have to be hauled upstream by trackmen. One of my men was very near being drowned here. We came to a place where the voyager is shut in between four enormous rocks, and then with effort passes through what is called Hell-Gate. The whole scene is really sinister. The mere stroke of the oars makes such an echo, re-echoed again from rock to rock, that even the bravest men shiver. At some distance beyond Hell-Gate comes the Devil’s Portage. When I had got so far, I was told there were no Indians at Fort Halkett, so we had to turn back. Each one of our company of seven made a bundle of his belongings, and fastened it on his shoulders. Of course, the canoe had to be carried too. We set out to walk, so as to reach a less dangerous part of the river. We climbed the steep and rugged sides of the mountain, and then crept down precipices where a single false step would have been fatal. I never actually slipped. But my hair stood on end at several stages of this descent, and I suffered intensely from cramps in the legs. At last we reached the river, and got into our canoe. At the very moment of starting, a dangerous change of place by some of the men was near throwing us all into the torrent. But God was watching over us. We came into new dangers, and suffered much fatigue, but at length we found ourselves safe back at Fort Liard.”

It was in 1862 that Father Gascon, by the same route, actually visited Fort Halkett. On his return, he continued his journey down the Mackenzie, in September, going on past Fort Simpson, to visit Father Grollier at Fort Good Hope. On October 7, his canoe was stopped by the ice. He then took his pack on his back, and marched for five

days by such river banks as could be traced until he reached Good Hope. In 1863 he returned to Fort Resolution.

The endurance of Father Gascon, whether on the open road or in his poor mission-house, was a remarkable instance of the power of a strong spirit over a weak body. He was long and lanky—"run up by contract," someone might have said—with no spare material in his composition. The Indians from the beginning called him Yialtri-gon, the Scraggy Praying One. His stomach was a great trouble to him. He could take very little food. Cramps in the stomach made his nights almost sleepless. He would go to bed near midnight, and rise to spend hours in his little chapel from two o'clock. Prayer and work and suffering, without a murmur, were his daily bread.

In his winter journeys, Father Gascon always went on foot. Day and night he moved forward rapidly on the snow-shoes. Coming to the camping-ground, he assigned the better places to others. Partly through poverty, and partly to lighten his load, he often marched without a change of linen. One day, when he was "so immortified" as to borrow an old shirt, he saw that his own was nearly black, and might possibly walk away from him! As if the "Old Boy" had special spite against this Francis Xavier of the Dénés, Father Gascon seemed never to be at the end of his chapter of accidents. Hence he got a second Indian name, Yialtri Douyé, the Unfortunate Praying One.

Of all the misfortunes and miseries of the Arctic regions, there was one which afflicted Father Gascon even more than his brethren—snow-blindness. The welcome coming of the spring in the bleak and barren North brings this *amari aliquid* to those especially whose eyesight is good. The April sun, to make up for his long night, darts his brilliant rays abundantly over the wide plains, the great lakes, and the broad rivers. The reflection of those rays from the smooth and shining surfaces all round will gradually make the pale skin red, and the red skin dark, and will bring the cuticle away in scales. But the same floods of light from an unclouded sky very quickly exhaust the powers of the retina. In less than a day's march over the snow-fields, blood appears on the eyeballs, as if from the touch of a lancet. Pain increases; malignant pimples are formed; the eyelids rise and fall as if scraping the eyeball with sand-paper. The whole head becomes affected, and its burning muscles squeeze the brain as if in a vice. The Indians sometimes roll upon the ice in torture upon such occasions, and not a few of them remain blinded for life.

To protect themselves against snow-blindness, the Dénés cover their face with a darkish cloth, the Eskimos use a sort of visor, made of bark, and the Europeans green spectacles. But these "preservatives" cannot be depended upon very much, especially if the sun hides behind a cloud, scattering, though hardly weakening, its rays, and obliging the traveller to search the more carefully for some sign of a trail in the universal whiteness.

Father Gascon, with his general bad health, specially keen eyesight, and very frequent long journeys, was yet too poor to have green spectacles, and he suffered much every year. Once, in the spring of the year, he wrote from Fort Rae, which is on the north arm of Great Slave Lake, and at a great distance from Fort Resolution: "Just an hour before I got here my sight failed me. I had to get into the sled, and I suffered great pain. On my arrival here, after the usual hand-shake of the Indians, I baptized a child in danger of death. The light of the candle inflamed my eyes more and more. I had to keep them closed against the light for two days and three nights, during which I suffered a regular martyrdom. My poor Indians, sympathizing with me, advised me to hold my face over the steam from a kettle of strong tea. I did so, but with no good result. The third evening, my eyes were so inflamed and painful that I thought I was to be completely blind. The least movement in the house, the least draught, increased my pains. I tried the steaming a third time, and with success. The pains were less the following days. My greatest regret was that I could neither read my office nor say Mass. For more than a month I felt shooting pains in my eyes. But, thank God, I did not become blind: I am able to continue to work for the salvation of the poor Indians."

In the beginning, St Joseph's mission-house, built by Father Faraud with his own hands, was on a little island (called Orignal, or Moose island), opposite Fort Resolution, which is on the mainland. Father Gascon, when not absent on one of his long expeditions, used to make the journey between the mission and the fort every day. This meant a march of three miles each way. His visit to the fort was for the purpose of teaching the catechism to the children of the Company's servants, and to some Indians. It is worth mentioning that from the pebbles and poor pine trees of the island the mission buildings were brought, in 1890, to where they now are, near the fort. The strong arms and stout hearts of Father Dupire and

Father Ladet were responsible for this important missionary enterprise.

In the early days, however, and all through his life, Father Gascon gave himself heart and soul to the work of catechizing, no matter what might be the cost. For hours he would sit among the children with his book and little pictures, bringing home points of doctrine to their young minds. He also sang for them, and taught them to sing, Indian hymns, improvising such airs as suited their language and their customs.

When the Indians assembled in great numbers near the fort, in spring and autumn and the Christmas season, Father Gascon was in his element. Three times a day, if not four, he summoned his flock to their log-chapel. Having to deal with a primitive people, he was just such a priest as Mr. Graves's Father O'Flynn, even "helping the lazy ones on with the stick." He always made the round of the wigwams with a little bell and a big stick, and woe betide the laggards! When all were assembled, then hymns and sermon and catechism began, and continued. Father Gascon's eloquence was primitive and Scriptural: "*Est, est, Non, non.*" He drove his repeated affirmations into rather hard heads, not indeed "with the bagnet," but with an occasional smack on the cheek of some youthful or other disciple, the noise of which served to drive away the distractions even of those who only heard but did not feel. But all his disciples knew what a heart of gold this Black-robe had. He was welcome to chastise them. The poorest knew him best. Many a time they brought to their starving little ones his last morsel of fish or caribou meat. As for his brethren, or the passing voyagers who visited his cabin rude, they were always sure of a gracious and hearty welcome. They easily perceived that, when told to make themselves at home, the words were really and most cordially meant.

Father Gascon remained among his Yellow-knives until 1880. Owing to his infirmities, he then bade adieu to the Mackenzie and Great Slave Lake. Yet for twenty-seven years longer he worked in the missions of Manitoba. In 1907 he had to retire to the Oblate Junior House at St Boniface. There, for the last seven years of his life, the aged missionary, broken by original ill-health, and a most laborious career, was the edification of the youthful students. Such were his sufferings that he was never able to lie down to rest. Yet there was no note of complaint in the sighs and moans which brought him some relief. Until two



FORT RESOLUTION INDIAN SCHOOL

months before his death, he rose nearly every day from his chair of pain to offer up the holy sacrifice of the Mass. The rest of the day and night he spent in prayer, and in spreading appeals in Canada and the United States for the men and means so needed for the apostolic work in the North-West. He appealed especially to his own near relations, of whom he lived to count three hundred, like so many other aged persons in the Christian families of French Canada.

Father Gascon did not lay down his pen, his breviary, or his rosary, until the very end. He departed this life on January 3, 1914, and it was particularly pleasing to his piety that the day was a Saturday, which is specially dedicated to the blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate, whose faithful servant he had been from a child.

We have dwelt upon the career of Father Gascon because he was a typical missionary of the Yellow-knives. Such merits as his, and the obedience and goodwill of that tribe, have created a model mission at Fort Resolution. All the Indians of that place are Catholics. The same, indeed, may be said of quite a dozen such trading posts in the Far North. In 1909 it was estimated that the Catholic Indians and half-breeds of Athabaska-Mackenzie were 16,000 in number. At Fort Resolution, after many long years of much hardship (of which something may be read in *The Grey Nuns in the Far North*), two fine up-to-date mission-buildings have been erected. One is the residence of the missionary Bishop and priests, the other a convent orphanage. There is, of course, a public church as well. The alms collected by the Vicar Apostolic have enabled him to set up a sawmill, and to place several little boats upon the lake, so that now the riches of the woods and of the waters can be utilized, and it is only an extraordinary famine that has to be feared.

This mission on the banks of Great Slave Lake, so far away, is connected even with Montmartre and Paray-le-monial in true devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In the sanctuary of Paray-le-monial may be seen to-day the banner presented by the Vicariate Apostolic of Mackenzie. Round about Great Slave Lake are trappers and hunters who will undertake a march of several days in order not to miss receiving holy Communion on the first Friday of the month. Those unable to come to the church know how to practise spiritual Communion. A great many of the Indians are frequent or even daily communicants. A dying Indian at Fort Resolution said to his wife: "Love

the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and teach the children. Never mind teaching them anything else. It is not long since the Father taught me, but I see that what he says is true."

The mission *Codex Historicus* at Fort Resolution contains this entry: "*April 12, 1912.*—For the first time since the foundation of the mission, our lamp of the sanctuary burns, not to be again extinguished. May God bless our generous benefactor! This mysterious light will look to us, and to all, as the Star of Bethlehem to the Wise Men."

These lines tell a tale of poverty. For sixty years the Mackenzie missionaries were unable to keep a light before the Blessed Sacrament. They could not buy the oil, and their dwelling was not so sheltered and warm that a burning wick could keep the oil from freezing. In 1864, in an audience of Pope Pius IX, Bishop Grandin was explaining the case. The Holy Father was embarrassed. He said it was only in times of persecution the Church allowed the Blessed Sacrament to be reserved without this sign of its presence. The sensitive Bishop continued to explain the difficulties and sufferings of the missionaries, who were often allowed to say Mass with only one light. "What would become of us," he asked, "if deprived of the sacramental presence of our blessed Lord?" The Pope was moved. He granted what was asked. He said, "I see that, without the glory of persecution, you have the reality of martyrdom."

To-day, after seventy years of inglorious martyrdom, not only St Joseph's Mission, Fort Resolution, but all the missions of the Mackenzie Vicariate, are able to keep their sanctuary lamps trimmed and bright.

CHAPTER XVI

FORT SMITH: YELLOW-KNIVES AND OTHERS

ST ISIDORE'S Mission at Fort Smith, and another mission (Fort Fitzgerald) a little farther south, have been the offspring and dependents of Fort Resolution. They may therefore be treated of here in connection with that central place of the Yellow-knives, although these are less numerous at Fort Smith than the Chipewyan Montagnais, and at Fitzgerald than the Fond du Lac Caribou-eaters.

Since the organization of the province of Alberta in 1905, Fort Smith may easily be found on the map just above the northern border of that province. It is on the Slave River, and not far from its tributary, Salt River. At Salt River itself lived Patriarch Beaulieu, at whose house, in the beginning, the Indians used to be assembled for instruction by Bishop Grandin, or an Oblate from Great Slave Lake or from elsewhere. In 1876 the mission was permanently established at the foot of the noisy rapids of Fort Smith, half-way between Great Slave Lake and Lake Athabaska. Those rapids are the last obstacle to navigation between the 60th degree of latitude and the North Pole. But they are formidable. Over obstructions spreading out for twenty-five miles, the powerful river, on its way to the North, tumbles down in three great cataracts which not even the severest winter can lay to rest. On the precipitous rocks around, one may see the pelicans—hardly distinguishable from the foam—seizing the fishes which are carried past. Here also is their aerie or breeding-place, the only one known in the Arctic regions. On sunny days, flocks of pelicans rise from out the spray in solemn flight, and go soaring on their great white wings above the woods, and the fort, and the mission, and the neighbouring houses. But their cries are always drowned—very suitable word—in the never-ceasing roar of the rapids. The water-power at Fort Smith would work mills and factories galore. No doubt it will one day be brought to bear upon the mineral resources of the northern land, and will perhaps supply light and heat to a whole city. With an eye to such a future, Bishop Breynat has laid out the mission premises,

and in 1914 he provided both a hospital and a school, under the care of the Grey Nuns.

Another practical work of this enterprising Bishop is St Bruno's Farm, established by means of many sacrifices in 1911. The farm is about twenty miles to the north-west of Fort Smith, amid the salty prairies watered by Salt River. It is sheltered by the Buffalo Mountains (the last home of the Red Man's four-footed friend), and, in spite of the high latitude, there are good hopes that both crops and cattle may be raised at St Bruno's for the benefit of the many missions of the Vicariate.

At the head of the rapids, and therefore to the south of Fort Smith, is a trading post known as Smith's Landing until 1916. At the request of the North-West Mounted Police, it was re-named Fort Fitzgerald, in memory of one of their comrades, Inspector Fitzgerald (a Catholic), who in 1911 died of hunger, with all his companions, in the course of an expedition, from their post at the mouths of the Mackenzie, to Fort Yukon. The famous North-West Mounted Police keep just a few men in barracks at Fort Fitzgerald (the inspector's office), Forts Resolution, Simpson, Norman, MacPherson, and Herschel Island (in Beaufort Sea).

St Mary's Mission at Fort Fitzgerald was formerly a mere out-station of St Isidore's (Fort Smith). At present, as the most northerly mission of the Athabaska Vicariate, it receives by water all the supplies for the Farther North, and sends them on, over a fifteen-mile portage, to Fort Smith, the most southerly mission of Mackenzie. Formerly the portage here was on the right bank of the Slave River, and was steep and very dangerous. A sort of a road has now been made through the woods on the left bank, and along this sort of a road a pair of horses from St Bruno's Farm can draw not only the supplies, but also—such is missionary progress—the scow which has brought them, and which will take them on to Great Slave Lake. It will be long before travellers see horses any farther north than those of St Bruno. Horses will never be able to travel over snow or ice like the dogs. The St Bruno horses, when not working in the spring or autumn, are sent out to graze in the woods, and they do graze after patiently scraping away the snow.

The rapids of Fort Smith have several times swept away a cargo of provisions, the strength of the current being far greater than that of the strong arms trying to guide the boat into the safety of the tiny harbour of Fort Fitzgerald,

at the head of the rapids. Alas! two precious lives also were lost at the same place. Father Brémond had been in charge of the mission at Smith's Landing (now Fitzgerald) for ten years. He was talented, and kind-hearted, and devoted to his work. The Indians worshipped him for his beautiful sermons in their own tongue. To him came a welcome guest, a new priest, Father Brohan, straight from the scholasticate at Liège, on his way to the Mackenzie, and apparently having a career of great promise before him. On Sunday afternoon, June 14, 1908, after Benediction, Father Brohan asked to be taken across to the right bank of the river, to a spot from which the first rapid could be seen. Father Brémond, a skilful canoeist, paddled him over. They came back singing. As they reached the eddying waters which form the little harbour, the canoe was partly turned by the strong current. A counter-stroke of the paddle by Father Brémond quickly righted it, but a nervous movement of Father Brohan caused the poor skiff to capsize, and in one instant to disappear before the affrighted eyes of Father Lefebvre and many Indians. Some of the young men launched boats immediately, but nothing could be done. No sign of the two missionaries, or of their canoe, was ever seen again.

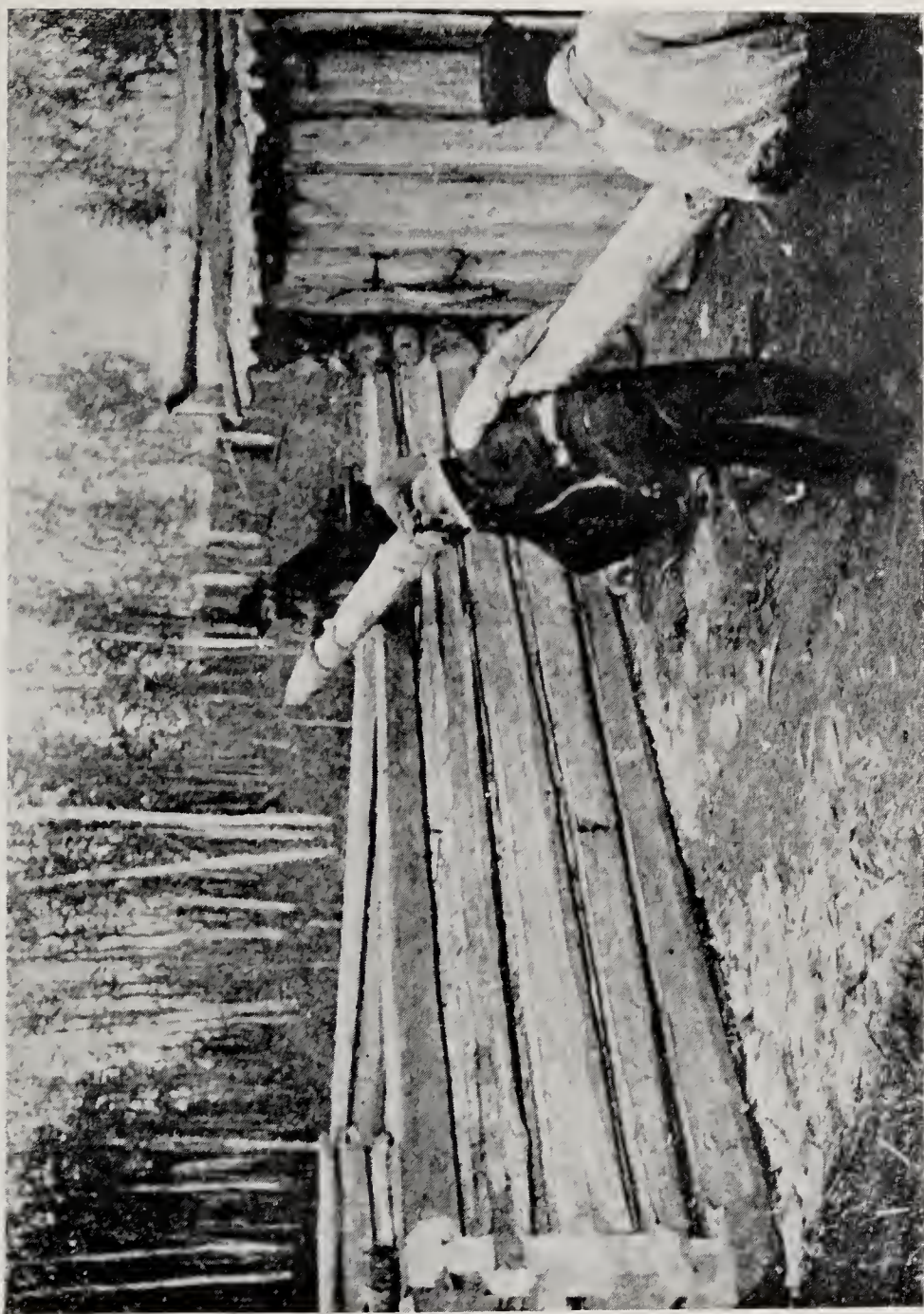
The Fort Smith district, above and below the rapids, has its tale of woe and hardship to tell. The St Isidore Mission (at the foot of the rapids) is now served, very valiantly, by Father Mansoz. He may be dreaming of a railway to come, bringing companies to turn the forests and mines into wealth. But in the meantime he has to depend for support upon the worst fishery in the North, and an occasional moose, and on such potatoes as are not frozen in the ground.

Father Mansoz has had several predecessors at Fort Smith, where the first Mass was said by Father Gascon on August 3, 1876. The post was afterwards visited from time to time by others, including Father Joussard, who became the first resident priest of that mission, and there, having God's blessing on his work, was content with the bread of indigence and the water of affliction.

Celestin Joussard, born in the diocese of Grenoble in 1851, was ordained priest at Autun in 1880 by Mgr. Clut, whom he accompanied to the North-West. His first winter was spent at Chipewyan, Lake Athabaska. In the spring of 1881 he knew Montagnais well enough to preach a mission to the Indians at Fort Smith. Next, he spent eight years at Great Slave Lake, assisting Father Dupire. During

those years, he usually paid an annual visit to Fort Smith, where he was stationed by himself in 1888-89. Afterwards he was sent to Fort Vermilion on the Peace River, where he learned the Cree and Castor (Beaver) dialects. At that post, he heard in 1909 of his appointment as Bishop coadjutor of Mgr. Grouard. He was consecrated in Vancouver City, British Columbia, on October 5, 1909, by Mgr. Dontenwill. The consecrating prelate was obliged to give the Bishop elect a soutane, which was by no means a good fit. He gave him also a beautiful ring, which was easily lost by the new wearer whilst he travelled by train towards Quebec over the same prairies which he had crossed in bullock-carts twenty-seven years before. At Quebec, Mgr. Jousard remained just long enough to witness, along with the other Canadian Bishops then assembled in council, a great public demonstration in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, organized by Father Lelièvre and the other Oblates in their populous St Saviour's parish in that old Catholic city. All the Bishops were delighted, and Mgr. Jousard said he could not expect ever to see the like again. He did not revisit his native land. He returned in haste to the land of his adoption. The axe and the saw were waiting for him at Fort Vermilion, where a new hut had to be built and the winter firewood stored up. On his way "home" he wrote: "When Father Jaslier and I reached Lake Wabaska, Father Batie could hardly recognize us. We had been in the rain for six days, ourselves and our horses sinking in mud, and wading through water, and, occasionally, both horse and dismounted man floundering in such quagmires as I had never seen in my long experience. On the last day of our journey, we were for an hour in water up to the waist, and for four hours of the night we were obliged to push forward, when we could hardly see well enough to help our horses out of the sticky slime. But we know why we go through such experiences. We thank God and take courage."

In the correspondence of Bishop Clut we have found a letter which gives a lively account of earlier days in the North. Father Jousard was at Fort Smith in the fall of 1884. The Indians wished to keep him there, and he felt it very hard to leave them. But he was obliged to return to Fort Resolution, bringing 112 packages and parcels, which had arrived from the south, and were to supply the Mackenzie missions all through 1885. Of his journey he wrote as follows to Mgr. Clut: "The earth already wears its white mantle, and the snow is still falling. The weather



ANOTHER LOG CABIN

is very cold, and the river begins to freeze. It is the 13th of October, and I set out with three young men, after commending ourselves heartily to our blessed Lady, for I am apprehensive of dangers. On the 14th our steersman falls ill. I take his place. We make all the haste that we can. There are already quantities of ice in the river, hindrances in our way, moving on before us and after us. Day and night we drop down with the current, for our rowing powers are little in such a heavily laden boat. If only we can escape being driven on the sands! The boat is so heavy, we could never get it off, and it would soon be ground to pieces by the gathering blocks of ice.

“Alas! my fears were realized. In the darkness of the third night, we were stranded in low water, in the middle of the river. We made desperate efforts to reach the left bank, so as to be able, in case of misfortune to our boat, to reach Great Slave Lake on foot, through the woods. In spite of all our efforts, the force of the current and the blocks of ice continue to drive us to the right bank, where there would be before us only the desert and death. The ice blocks scrape the sides of our boat, and must soon pierce them. The night is very dark, and there is no other sound than that of the rushing mounds of ice, breaking the banks formed by their predecessors, overtopping them, and falling headlong in avalanches. The frightening sound at first was distant. Soon it is close at hand. Our boat shivers and trembles in the power of a mighty enemy. We seem to be in a rapid. The river dashes on, but leaves us with ice all around us, and higher than our heads. We are literally in a prison of ice. For ten long minutes I keep praying, and hoping that the movements of the ice may make an opening through which to free the boat. In what seems a favourable moment, we get into the water, and we push with all our strength, but we cannot move the boat one inch. It seems to have grounded. And now what may be called an iceberg is bearing down upon us. If it strikes us, we are lost. How I pray! And my confidence in Mary Immaculate increases. On a sudden, the boat of itself turns, as if on a hinge. We jump in, get out of the way of the iceberg, and after an hour's hard rowing reach the left bank. Only then we find that our boat is leaking all over, and could not have lived much longer. We do the best we can, and we moor the boat as securely as possible. Yet, through fear of losing it we remain in it, and lie down on board. The snow is still falling. The ice is gathering and grinding all about us, raking us fore and

aft, so to speak, and soon it holds the boat as in a vice. The grating noise and the cold make sleep impossible, at least for me. I put off my blankets, and go down upon the snowy carpet of the bank. There I light a fire, and sit upon fir branches to wait for the coming of the day. It comes very slowly; at last the dawn shows us that the river is one solid white mass. Stark winter holds us, and our vessel, in thrall. It only remains for us to lift out and cache all our supplies. Having done this, we take our pack on our back—i.e., our blankets and food—and we set out, without snow-shoes, to walk to Great Slave Lake, through the snow and the woods, the grass-green steppes, and the quagmires. After two very exhausting days, we reach Fort Resolution, where Father Dupire had given up all hope of seeing us.

“Such, my lord, is the account of a journey which I have thought must have been very like many a journey of your own. But have not I also felt the efficacious help of the heavenly Mother of the missionary? I must add that even my misadventure brought me a great consolation. Trudging through the woods, I came upon a dying Indian, who wept with joy to see me. ‘Why weep?’ said one of my young companions. ‘Is not God the Master of life?’ But he wept only because he was so happy to see the man of prayer, and to be prepared for death. He said to me: ‘I was afraid I should never see you again. Last night I dreamt that I fell into the Slave River. I tried to grasp a floating plank, which always escaped me. It was my hold upon life. I am going. But now I have seen you, and I have made my good confession, and I am ready.’

“Do we not in such cases, Monseigneur, receive ample compensation for any sufferings to which we expose ourselves for the sake of our poor and dear and faithful Indians?”

CHAPTER XVII

FORT RAE: THE DOG-RIBS

IN 1866 a Dog-rib chief told one of the Oblate Fathers, in the following words, the meaning of the name and the origin of the tribe:

“Once upon a time, a Yellow-knife woman was living with two brothers, not having as yet found a husband. A stranger came to visit them, a fine figure of a man. He spent a few days in their tent. Then the brothers said to their sister: ‘Why not marry him? He is a Déné too, and a good-looking man.’ Something similar was said to the stranger. So they sat side by side, became friends, and were married. In the night the woman awoke and missed her husband. But when the fire in the tent went out, she heard a strange noise, as if a dog were gnawing bones on the hearth. Now those people had no dog. So they all got up, lighted the fire again, and searched everywhere in the tent, but could find no dog. When the darkness came again, the same sound was heard once more. Then one of the Déné brothers threw his stone hatchet in the direction of the sound. There was a sudden cry of pain. They all got up once more, and in the rekindled light they found a fine large black dog lying dead in the ashes and in its own blood. The stranger was never seen again. The two Déné brothers said: ‘The stranger was the dog! A man in the daytime, a dog in the night! And our sister’s husband! He was an *Eyouné* (a ghostly enemy from the other world).’ So to avert misfortune from themselves, they drove their sister away, because she had slept with the magician enemy, the human dog. The woman therefore went far away from the land of her fathers. She shed tears all alone in the wild and desert country to the east of the Déné hunting-grounds. She lived by setting snares for white rabbits, or by catching trout in the great lakes. In time she gave birth to six little dogs. Being full of shame, yet cherishing her own offspring, she made of reindeer-skin a bag closed with a running string, and in this she usually kept her little dogs shut up. One day, returning from a visit to the snares which she had set, she noticed,

in the warm ashes of the wigwam hearth, the prints of children's bare feet. She wondered. She knew there were only little dogs in her bag. Next day, she noticed the same thing again. Then this Yellow-knife woman said to herself: 'It must be that my little ones are like their father, human beings in the daytime, and dogs in the darkness. I know what I will do.' So she made a long string, which she fastened to the mouth of the bag, and took in her hand as she walked away as usual, telling her little ones to be very good while mother went to look for some white hares for their food. But she did not go far this time. She hid behind some bushes, and waited trembling. Soon she heard the little ones saying to each other, 'Mother is gone: let us come out and play.' Then one little head came out of the bag and looked all about. Then this first little dog jumped out, and no sooner had he reached the hearth than he was a pretty little boy. One after the other, all six came out, until there were six little boys and girls playing or dancing around the fire. The mother's heart was beating fast. She thought to keep the children from returning into the darkness of the sack, so that they might remain children. She pulled the cord which was to close the mouth of the sack, but before it could work well three of the little creatures had jumped in, and were dogs once more. The other three tried also to get in, and so to leave the light of day, but they were not able. The mother ran quickly to them, and took them in her arms, and cherished them—two boys and a little girl. She soon made for them white and pretty clothes out of hare-skins, and she brought them up well. As for the other three, who had gone back to their old form, she destroyed them. The two boys became very powerful, owing to the magic powers which they had inherited. Their tent was never without plenty of venison. They went to visit their maternal uncles, and these received them well, because they were good hunters, and because they had great magical powers. The two youths married their sister, and their children were very many. Of these children are we ourselves, we Dénés, whom our relations on the mother's side call *Lin-tchanrè*, in memory of our ancestor, the human dog."

Such is the Dog-rib legend, though told here or there with some adornments or variations. In our own day, our Christian Indians keep up the story as a sort of fairy tale in rants and rhymes. And they seem almost to retain some sort of belief in it, so strong is the power of national tradition, whether wise or foolish. The old *coureurs des bois*



SETTING SNARES FOR RABBITS

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translated *Lin-tchanrè* quite correctly as Plats-Côtés-de-Chiens, or Flancs-de-Chiens, or Dog-ribs. Among the Indians, the ribs of an animal are the tit-bits, and the Dog-rib tribesmen were named from, at all events, the noblest part of the most ignoble of animals in the opinion of all Dénés. Dog is the word of contempt amongst them: it is equal to vile stranger, or barbarian of the lowest type. But Flanc-de-Chien, or Dog-rib, is a title of honour, a name of which Dénés, *the men*, are as proud as some Europeans, learned in heraldry, may be proud of some animal figure in their coat of arms. Louis Veuillot heard from Bishop Grandin of the Dog-rib legend, and he remarked, in his famous article, *L'Evêque Pouilleux*, that some of the Red Men were so proud as to claim descent from a great dog, whereas some of the wise men of the Old World were so humble as to be content to have a monkey for their father.

The proud Dog-ribs found one European whom they considered worthy of membership in their own noble tribe. When Father Duport had to leave them for Fort Resolution, they kept sending him messages like this: "Ah! our Dog-rib Father, when will you come back to us? You were one of ourselves. You could march, and talk, and laugh as well as ourselves. You were as poor and wretched as we are. When will you come back? Come back to us, we say. You were a real Dog-rib. We never thought that a Paleface could become a Dog-rib, like you. Come back to us then. The ancients of the tribe have spoken."

The territory of the Dog-ribs lies between the territories of the Yellow-knives and the Eskimos—that is to say, between Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake. They spend the summer in the Barren Lands, the winter in the woods, with the caribou which supply them with food and clothing. They are supposed to kill 20,000 head of caribou every year. If the herds do not pass near them, in their journeys between north and south, the Indians die of hunger in great numbers.

Amidst those Dog-rib Indians the North-West Company of old established what is still marked on the map as Old Fort Providence, on the eastern shore of the north arm of Great Slave Lake. It was central for the many rivers and lakes of the Dog-rib hunting-grounds. At a later date, Dr. Rae, a chief factor in the Hudson Bay Company, during his search for Sir John Franklin, founded a new fort (which bears his name) in a new place, farther north on the same arm of the lake. This Fort Rae was the centre of supplies of food rather than of furs for the Hudson Bay

Company. The same must be said of Fond du Lac, on Lake Athabaska. To Fort Rae were brought every year eight or ten thousand caribou, which meant for the forts and barges of the Company a supply of meat which might be fresh, or dried and smoked and pounded. Thus it was that the Company's men, bringing their loads of furs from the North to Methy (La Loche) Portage, far away in the modern Saskatchewan, were not dependent on their chances by the way.

The first Fort Rae was built at the foot of a mountain, which is surrounded by water. The place is on the coast of the north arm, in a wild and splendid solitude, whose islets and bays show no sign of life except when the caribou go past. In 1906, the new Fort Rae was built eighteen miles farther north, on Lake Marian, which is really the giant hand of the north arm of Great Slave Lake. The mission has followed the fates of the fort. It was for forty-seven years at the original Fort Rae. Since 1906 it is near the new fort, whilst often remembering that there used to be more wood and better fishing near the first fort.

The founder of the mission at Fort Rae was Father Grollier, who wrote in 1859: "I came here from Fort Resolution. There are nearly 1,200 Indians about this post. I came as soon as I possibly could, because it was reported that Archdeacon Hunter would send a Protestant minister here. Holy Mass was offered up at Fort Rae for the first time on Sunday, April 17, 1859, the anniversary of the day on which they that went before, and they that followed our Lord Jesus Christ cried, 'Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.' I have placed this new mission under the patronage of St Michael, Archangel, the great champion of heaven's spiritual forces."

The Indians of Fort Rae are all Catholics now. The Dog-rib tribesmen retain their primal simplicity. Their raiment is of skin; they are far from clean; they are utter strangers to all civilized customs; they are absolutely unashamed mendicants. But, at the same time, they are like the Scriptural Nathanael (*i.e.*, "whom God gave"): they are of quick and lively faith, Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile. Mgr. Grandin used to say that it was among them more than elsewhere that he found the justification of the phrase *Anima naturaliter Christiana*. He spent three months at Fort Rae in 1860, and he baptized 164 of those Flancs-de-Chiens, of whom he often told a few stories. One day when he was saying Mass, a big

omadhawn lighted his pipe at the candle on the altar, and went on smoking. At the *Dominus vobiscum*, the Bishop stretched out his hand farther than the rubric requires, and knocked the pipe out of the poor fellow's mouth. This particular Dog-rib must have been intelligent enough, since he seems to have understood such a mere hint! It was evidently another man—indeed, it was the chief—whom the Bishop, after much instruction, sent far away into the woods, to baptize a young man who was dying. He returned to report quite joyfully how well he had done everything. "I gave him a name, too," he said. "What did you call him?" "Jesus Christ." The Bishop explained that this name, although the most beautiful, is not to be given in Baptism. "I gave it," said the chief, "in order that Jesus Christ may remember the boy all the more."

Of those who visited Fort Rae from time to time, before there was a resident priest, Father Gascon was the one who went oftenest—no less than seven times. The others, besides Father Grollier and Bishop Grandin, were Fathers Eynard and Petitot. The first resident priest was Father Bruno Roure (born in 1844). He held that post from 1872 to 1911. For a few months in 1879, Brother Boisramé was with him, building him a house. Every two years his confessor, Mgr. Clut, paid him a visit. With these exceptions, he was alone with his Indians for fourteen out of the thirty-nine years. Father Ladet was with him from 1886 to 1889. Father Bousso spent a short time at Fort Rae. Only in 1903 did a confrère go to remain with Father Roure permanently. This was Father Duport, that perfect Dog-rib, of whom we have already spoken. In 1911, Father Roure (leaving Father Laperrière in his place) left Fort Rae to found St Bruno's Farm, in what he might think the Far South, near Fort Smith. In 1915, just as he was beginning to make something grow on the farm, he had to go North again, to be chaplain to the Grey Nuns and their orphans at Fort Providence, on Great Slave Lake. There he quietly began to grow somewhat old at last; but he remained always the *vir pius et prudens*, and one whose charity and kind heart made others happy. He is well remembered still at Fort Rae, for the Dog-ribs know that he was the first to share their sufferings. Whatever reached him at that Siberian post always took a long time to come. It was already far in the North, when it reached Fort Providence, where the Mackenzie issues out of Great Slave Lake. The rest of its journey to Fort Rae was no short

or easy one. Father Roure used to tell that, in the parcels which reached him, he usually found a shirt. One sleeve was filled with flour, which had to last a year. Out of the other sleeve he brought forth various articles to be used in barter, or needed by the missionary himself in chapel or kitchen. Many a quarter of venison he was able to send to the orphanage, when his stock of supplies thus enabled him to trade. A great disappointment to him sometimes was to receive the means of repairing his nets too late for the autumn fishing. This meant that all through the winter he had to break the ice every day, in order to try to find enough to eat. Father Roure always refused help from his family, so that he might remain the poor missionary of the poor. But he was careful and far-seeing. So he was asked one day if he had ever really suffered from hunger. "Well, yes," he said; "one evening I went supperless to bed, because I had not a morsel to eat; another evening because I forgot all about supper." Father Roure never objected to a little joke, even at his own expense. When an Indian crowd, after attending to their religious duties at Fort Rae, had gone far away to their own camp, one woman came back to tell the Blackrobe she was very sorry she had pulled the hair of another woman, whom she only wished to chastise properly. Father Roure, wishing to come to the point, asked what had really happened. So, for an object-lesson, the squaw seized his own very spare locks, and pulled very hard. "Stop, stop!" said the priest; "I understand." "No, you cannot understand," was the woman's response; "I held much longer, and pulled much harder." But as she had got a handful or so of the priest's locks, she was nearly satisfied, but she said if he had only had a better head of hair, she could have explained the case better.

Father Roure, when he first arrived at Fort Rae, found the hut, 17 feet long, which Father Gascon had built. It served the resident priest for seven years. After five years he was able to put in a pane of glass, along with the pieces of parchment which served to let in some light. But he did not enjoy it long. One evening, as he sat beside his lamp of reindeer grease, the glass was smashed by a bullet, which grazed his head, and lodged in one of the tree trunks forming the opposite wall. The gunman was an Indian, whom Father Roure had excommunicated for living with a young woman while his lawful aged wife was alive. Excommunication is a very serious matter socially, where the people are all Catholics. As there was no help for broken

glass, Father Roure got up and fastened on another piece of parchment.

The same missionary has left us in his own words the account of an adventure which befell him in this hut of his, where there was no chair, nor bench, nor handy tool of any sort, and only an earthen floor. "During the night of November 10-11, I heard the roof labouring like a ship among the breakers. I guessed it might come down altogether. So, instead of lying, as usual, near the fire, I went and lay down close to the wall, where the beams could not reach me. At midnight the roof tumbled down, but I took no harm. When morning came, I got up to rebuild my habitation."

Father Roure at Fort Rae had one human consolation, which is very rare in similar isolated outposts. Geographers, explorers, and tourists called there occasionally as at the *Ultima Thule* of civilized life, and the next door to the empty Arctic regions. The representative of some learned society would set up his apparatus for observations of one sort or another, and would then drop in for a friendly chat with the French missionary. Or a sportsman would come, looking for the only sort of trophy still wanting to him, the horned and woolly head of a musk-ox, an animal of the Barren Lands, concerning which Father Roure was able to give the warning that if only wounded it is extremely dangerous. In 1885, a very adventurous Englishman visited Fort Rae. He was seventy years of age, and "rolling in wealth." He had been everywhere, apparently. He had faced successfully panthers, jaguars, crocodiles, and lions. Neither climate nor wild beast had ever got the better of him. He was determined to stalk the Barren Lands, to try conclusions with the fierce musk-ox, and to push on very far north. Before getting into the Barren Lands, or meeting the *Ovibos moschatus*, he lost his nose, or part of it, in 50 degrees of frost. Father Roure patched him, and the indomitable sportsman set out again. But after two days on snow-shoes, though in the shelter of the woods, he thought it was time to turn back. He had got frost-bitten again, and his guides had eaten up his provisions far too quickly. He told Father Roure that he rather enjoyed making acquaintance with hardship, but that he did not want to die of hunger and cold. One must draw the line somewhere. So he said good-bye, and returned home to die happily in his bed in England.

We have mentioned already the naturally religious turn of mind of the Dog-rib Indians. Along with this there

goes a great deal of superstition. In fact, if the missionaries were hard pressed, they would have to acknowledge that many of their disciples are almost as superstitious as other people nearer home who believe in mascots, unlucky days, unlucky numbers, unlucky salt-cellar, turning tables, and tossing cups, or who distinctly hear the ghostly Cardinal Newman giving them his blessing, in bad Latin, with an American accent. There were of old among the Indians superstitious practices, manifestly wrong or barbarous. These half a century of the Gospel has quite driven away. Others, which are merely silly rather than wicked, disappear very slowly. On a very stormy day, one may sometimes see a very honest Christian furtively casting into the water his pipe, or knife, or some other valuable article—just as Polycrates threw his precious ring—for good luck, or to appease the spirit of the winds. Again, the Indians will not eat, nor allow their dogs to eat, the flesh of the best fur-bearing animals. It is too precious, too sacred. And nobody must ever laugh at the original (moose). Every hunter, too, has recognized in a dream some animal which must be taboo to him. One man will never take a marten; another a hare; another a goose. Our friend Pierre Beaulieu, a first-class hunter, has never killed a bear. If he meets one in the forest, he may not say, "I looks towards you, and I likewise bows," but that is what he does, quite literally. Death before dishonour, or the violation of a taboo! As one good turn deserves another, the taboo animal sends the other animals within range of the friendly hunter's gun or bow. The Dog-ribs always cut off the snout of the animals which they kill, though they have to accept a less price for the skin in such a case. Presumably, this is a very ancient custom, the reason for which has been clean forgotten. Father Bousso, at Fort Rae, having killed a thieving crow, was near getting into great trouble because he set it up as a scarecrow. Such an object would be sure to bring on a hurricane! Father Breynat, among his own Indians at Fond du Lac, once killed a fawn with the butt end of his gun. A doubly unlucky deed! Game should never be struck on the head, and never killed with wood. The caribou would abandon Fond du Lac, and the Indians would starve. But perhaps, if the Indians parted with their beloved missionary, the spirits of the caribou would be appeased. Father Breynat himself, as secretary, was allowed to write the tribal letter to the Bishop, Mgr. Grandin, demanding his recall for the good of the people. However, he did not make haste to

go, and in the next season the caribou were more numerous than ever. But naturally the Indians remained as attached as ever to their own ideas. One of the ancients of the tribe was deputed to visit Father Breynat. He said: "We see now why the caribou have come back. We have examined your gun. Look at that bit of iron on the stock of it. It was with that you struck. And your striking on the head was overlooked by the caribou, because you are a foreigner. Thus no harm has come to us. But beware! We might be ruined."

Women, God help them! are the occasion of much vain fear and anxiety among the Dénés, and are often most cruelly treated. If a woman steps over a man's head-dress or gun, it is imagined that his hunting day might as well be over: he will never kill anything again. If she walks upon a bear-skin, sickness will visit the camp. If her boat passes over the nets, the fish will escape. If a caribou tongue touches her tongue, the spirit of the caribou will at once become a chatterbox, and will go and tell to all its nation everything that can be said against the Dénés. A woman is strictly forbidden to eat, or to touch, the muzzle of the original. It is the noblest part of the beast, which, through shame, would leave the hunting-grounds that had witnessed such a degradation. The coming of the Grey Nuns had a great effect upon the Indians. They saw those holy "women of the prayer" treated with great respect by all the Palefaces, even chief factors, even great chiefs of the prayer. And the Indians themselves venerated them too. Nevertheless, they would not allow the muzzles to reach them. When the Sisters came to Chipewyan, the Indians used to cut off the muzzles of the elk or moose which they sold to the missionaries. They were afraid they might reach the convent. At Fort Providence, the missionary Father gave a promise which satisfied the hunters. Of late years, the interdict has been lifted off the Grey Nuns by the Montagnais and Slaves. But the Dog-ribs are still the stern and unbending Tories.

It was in a Dog-rib camp, not long ago, that Father Roure and Father Duport were the saddened witnesses of a case of great cruelty caused by superstition. A wolf had killed and eaten a man, and was known to be still in the neighbourhood of the camp. But to kill an animal that had eaten human flesh was quite unlawful. Everyone therefore was on the watch, not to attack the wolf, but to run away from it. One day the wolf was seen coming down a slope towards a certain wigwam. The good man

of the house took up his gun and ran, ordering his wife to stay where she was. The woman seized a hatchet, took her stand against a pine tree, placed her infant between her feet, and faced the monster. Terribly wounded by tooth and claw, she yet held off the wolf with one hand, and with the other struck many a good blow. When the howling ceased, the husband came home. When he saw the wolf lying panting in the snow, its jaws all red with his wife's blood, he became furious against the woman. "What!" he roared. "You have killed an animal that has eaten a Déné! And with my own hatchet! I a man! You a woman! I must now kill you." Fortunately his eye lighted upon the crucifix hanging in his hut, and he remembered that after all he was a Christian.

The condition of woman among the Dénés has been immensely improved by the Gospel. She is allowed to live. She knows, and men admit, that she has a soul. Some respect is shown her, in order to please God. But she still has much to suffer, because old superstitions die so very hard. Even when she has most claim for consideration and respect, the selfish Dénés, through absurd fear of some misfortune to themselves, insist upon her submission to the prescriptions of some ancient laws, which are really cruel. The growing girl is cut off for a period from family life and the camp. From time to time this strict isolation is renewed, until maturity. But on the first occasion she must not have anything sweet or good to eat: she would be always too fond of good cheer. She must not be allowed to see a new knife: she would be for ever lazy. She has to wear a veil, and she must never lift it: she would become too pert. This tabooed person has first of all to leave the family tent, or hut, on all fours, by a small opening made for this sole purpose. She has to live in a special little shelter formed of tree branches. With many a precaution, a certain amount of firewood is given her. Many a poor young victim of this sort dies of cold, or hunger, or sickness, or is accidentally burned to death, within hail of the camp, but calling for help in vain.

When she is becoming a mother, the Déné woman is treated still more rigorously. Putting on the worst garments to be had—since they must be destroyed afterwards—she retires into the forest all alone, unless perchance some charitable old woman consents to remain near her. When her child is born, she wraps him up in moss, gathered beforehand, and she takes what care of him she can. If he dies of cold, she hangs the little body in a cypress tree,

out of reach of the wolves, and as long as the ground remains frozen she comes to sing to her little one the story of her grief. Sometimes the mother quickly follows her child into the other-world hunting-grounds. Mgr. Clut, in the forest, with 47 centigrade degrees of frost, found a young mother, in a wasting fever, holding her trembling infant in her arms. He baptized the infant, having with great difficulty persuaded a godmother to hold a child who was still sequestered. No godfather was to be thought of at all in such a case. The baby died the same day. Next day the young mother died in her dug-out in the snow, within sight and sound of the tent where her husband and her other children were laughing and singing round a cheerful fire.

The mother and child in all such cases remain sequestered for two months if the child is a boy and for three months if a girl. After some days, however, the severity of the code is somewhat relaxed. The mother is allowed to live in some corner near the wigwam. But no one is allowed to speak to her, and for her food she must be content with the leavings of the others. And whatever poor articles she may be permitted to use have to be destroyed, when her sentence has been served.

If the tribe should be on the march, in the case we are supposing, the expectant mother retires into the wood, unattended. A few hours later, with her new-born babe upon her back, she sets out on snow-shoes to overtake her people at the appointed camping-ground. Such a truly forced march is a martyrdom for the poor mother. She has to avoid the beaten track, for fear of ruining the prospects of the hunting and fishing seasons, and of bringing all sorts of misfortunes on the men and their dogs. She is obliged, therefore, to make a new trail beside the other, to clear a way for herself through the forest, going stumbling over the tangled brushwood, which lies beneath the soft and deep snow. So she has to march for days and nights, and perhaps for months, with her burden on her back. If through downright necessity she crosses the public trail, it is only after spreading fir branches thereupon, so as not to contaminate that ground with her own feet. If her journey is in the summer-time, she cannot be admitted into any canoe. Planks are laid down as a junction between two canoes. The woman takes her seat thereon, with her feet in the water, not daring to touch either canoe, nor to be helped by a friendly hand. She risks being drowned, but the drowning of a woman is thought a less misfortune

than the bad luck that would follow violation of the taboo. Father Roure, on a stormy day, saw a poor woman and her child approaching the shore in this fashion. He thought at every tossing of the canoes she would be lost. When she landed, he reproached the oarsmen with having ventured on the lake with her in such weather. They answered: "There was no other way of escape. One of our children heard the *dénédjéré* (the enemy) in the branches. There was no time to lose. We had to cross the bay."

In spite of all this, the married (even pre-Christian) Indian woman, if childless, is as unhappy as the Jewish Anna, who "wept and did not eat," begging for children, lest she should be sorrowful even unto death. So strong is the natural God-given instinct, which is resisted only among post-Christian barbarians. Among the Déné women to-day, religion, a sense of duty, strengthens and sanctifies the natural lawful desire. They look upon their children as a great treasure, gifts of God, God's children, to be rightly cared for on his behalf, in view of his reward. They expect to be well received by him who blessed them with children, when they are able to say, "I am giving you these Dénés to fill the places of the evil spirits who were disobedient."

The emancipation of all the Déné women cannot be far off, seeing the great change for the better which has already taken place among the Montagnais, Caribou-eater, and Slave tribes. But the remains of superstition are cast out very slowly, and only by prudence, patience, and perseverance.

Though the Dog-ribs are so slow, or hard-headed, or hard-hearted, on one point, they and the Loucheux (Squint-eyed) are considered the best Catholics in the North. They understand their religion. Even that zealous Protestant, the late Bishop Bompas, could not win over a certain Dog-rib, to whom he said: "I hear the priest refuses to pray with you. Come to me. Meanwhile, here is a very good cap for you." "No!" said the Indian, "when I want one I will buy it with my furs. The Father did not reject me. It is I who have been living badly. But now, to show you that the Catholic prayer is the right one, I will change my ways." In point of fact, this unbelieving polygamist set about obeying the laws of the Church, was baptized, and became a devout Christian.

All the Indians instructed by our missionaries are attentive to the teachings and precepts of the Church, although

it may be that they can spend only a few days occasionally in the neighbourhood of the mission. Every Christmas, "when the Great Bear marks the midnight hour," and every Sunday and feast day (shown by a cross in the little calendar supplied to them), when the summer sun, or the winter moon, is at the point which means the hour for Mass, the Indians of the camps assemble at one lodge for divine worship. All is gone through with as much piety as was ever found among the hermits of the Thebaid. Hymns, the rosary, a sermon by the chief, or one of the ancients of the tribe, and a spiritual Communion, unite those souls with the Masses which are actually being celebrated in their chapel very far away. The devotions done, each one contributes what he has brought to make a common festive meal. The calumet, and plans for the next hunting expedition, close the business of the day. The Indians are strict observers of the Sunday's rest. They would think it wrong to fire a shot on the Lord's Day, unless in the greatest necessity. They say the rosary every day, and never omit either morning or night prayers. A youthful Protestant explorer, an English University man, who visited Fort Rae, was impressed by the fidelity to "the practices of the Catholic Church" which he noticed among the Dog-ribs. He never, during his two months among them, saw them take a meal without grace before and after, and he sometimes wondered for what they were able to say "We give thee thanks." The Sunday services he found quite elaborate. They were always followed by festivity in camp. When the Indians were voyaging, their devotions took place before a fresh start was made in the morning. It was amazing to the English visitor to see the Indians remaining on their knees in the snow of the Barren Grounds, reciting their prayers whilst their teeth chattered with the cold, and telling their beads with half-frozen fingers. (*Explorations in the Far North*, by F. Russel. Cambridge, Mass., 1898.)

The fidelity of the Dog-ribs was brought home even to Pope Pius X by their own missionary. When Father Roure had spent thirty-five unbroken years among them, he told them that he was about to go across the great lands, and beyond the great salt water, to visit his own country (which he had left for their sake), and to see also the Great Chief of the Great Chiefs of Prayer. A council of the ancients of the tribe soon desired the beloved Blackrobe to present to the Great Chief of Chiefs "all the happy hearts of the *Lin-tchanré*," and to take to the Holy Father the best gifts

which it was possible for them to offer. They gave also to Father Roure himself a hundred pairs of moccasins, as he would be sure to wear out as many on such a long journey! To the Pope they sent a piece of pemmican, made expressly for him by the most pious Indian woman in the place, and a luscious smoked caribou tongue, and an extra fine pair of slippers, made of deer-skin, but with figured designs in porcupine skin. The Indians said, "The Great Chief of Prayer Chiefs will be pleased with those presents." Father Roure afterwards declared that he was, in all truth. When they were laid before him in the Vatican, the Pope seemed to have got his heartiest laugh since the day he left Venice. He handled the fine slippers; he made acquaintance with the pungent odour of the eatables; he cautiously tasted the pemmican; and he placed all those gifts from the Far North on one of the shelves in his private library. To the givers Pius X sent a paternal blessing by Father Roure, whose words may have made His Holiness wish that all Catholics were as good Christians as the Dog-ribs. Their great missionary, this Father Bruno Roure, spent his last years at Fort Providence (of which we have yet to speak). There he closed his long and fruitful apostolic career on October 3, 1920.

The principal posts served by Father Roure and others from Fort Rae (or sometimes from Fort Resolution) were Yellow-knife River, sixty-five miles to the south; Lake La Martre (in Indian *Tsan-trié*), a very large lake, eighty miles to the north-west; Wetcho (a chief's name) Camp, 160 miles to the north, reached after many portages; and a camp 200 miles to the north-east in the Barren Lands, where the forest ends. At each of those posts might be found one or two hundred Indians.

Father Petitot in 1864 ventured from Fort Rae very far into the North. During this expedition he registered 271 baptisms, making 319 when added to those of Fort Rae itself. Those converts of his had no opportunity of seeing a priest again, but Indians coming from their midst used to relate that they remained always faithful to their Christian profession. Father Petitot always planted a great cross among the people with whom he stayed for a while. The cross at Wetcho is standing still. Father Petitot discovered many lakes and rivers in that journey, and to these he gave very familiar Oblate names, such as Mazenod and Taché. Eight at least of these names are easily found, near Great Bear Lake, on the official map of the present day, which shows also a Petitot River.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MACKENZIE: THE SLAVE TRIBE

RELIGIOUSLY, the so-called Slaves have been specially favoured. They have reason to say with gratitude that God hath not done in like manner to every nation. Their missionaries were most numerous, and of high apostolic worth. Bishops Grandin, Faraud, Clut, and Grouard; Fathers Gascon, Petitot, Genin, de Krangué, Lecorre, Ladet, Roure, Dupire, Gourdon, Audemard, Lecomte, Brochu, Ducot, Laity, Constant-Giroux, Gouy, Le Guen, Vacher, Frapsauce, Laperrière, Andurand, Bousso, Moisan, and Bezannier have laboured among the Slaves. These Indians have not corresponded as they should with the graces which God sent them. Mgr. Grouard wrote of them in 1871 just what he thinks of them still: "These Slaves have no great vices, but they have no great virtues. They are soft, easy-going, and slothful, in religious matters—quite different from the other Montagnais tribesmen, who are usually earnest and fervent."

The name of Slave given to these people by the early explorers shows what was thought of their natural servility and laziness. In the Déné idioms they are known as "Those allowed to live," with the evident meaning that they are not worth exterminating. The scornful title seems to tell, like the name Slave, the ancient history of this tribe. Of old, the braves from the south and the east drove them out of the hunting-grounds about Great Slave Lake. On the north, the Hare-skins and Loucheux would forbid them the Polar Circle. There remained to them, therefore, the wide countries through which the great Mackenzie rolls, the territory which is to-day the centre of the Vicariate Apostolic of Mackenzie.

The various missions among the Slaves are on the banks of the Mackenzie or its tributaries. The river itself bears its special name from where it issues out of Great Slave Lake. The Naotcha, the Giant River, as the Indians call it, has, in that beginning of its mighty course, a breadth of twenty or twenty-five miles. A multitude of islands and islets enhance the wild grandeur of that scene. In the front

rank, and in the centre of the archipelago, is Grande Ile, or Big Island, clothed in verdure, and washed by waters in which fish abound in due season. The first trading fort for the district was set up in Big Island. There also, on August 14, 1858, the first members of the Slave tribe were met by Father Grollier, who established among them the Mission of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It served for three years only. In 1861, Mgr. Grandin, considering Big Island inconvenient in some ways, and too exposed to storms and floods, looked out for a better site. He followed in his canoe the windings of the broad Mackenzie amid its many islands. He crossed that part of "the Giant River" which is called the Castor or Beaver Lake. He went down a very long and noisy, but not dangerous rapid, and he found on the right bank a promontory, where high grass or weeds promised a fertile soil, and a half-burned forest promised wood enough for building as well as burning. He landed there. The place was about forty miles down the river from Big Island. As he looked over the waters, the setting sun was throwing golden rays over the green vesture of the nearest islands, where the river broadens out into another lake. At the foot of the promontory an eddying backwater formed a little creek or bay, very safe for boats, and in the waters around were shoals of fish, seemingly asking for somebody to take them. The Bishop said to himself, "Here is the place for a mission, one which ought to be the Providence of the other missions in this desolate North." As he walked upon the shore, a boat of the Hudson Bay Company came along, bringing Mr. Ross, the chief official of the Mackenzie district. After the first polite exchanges, Mgr. Grandin said, "Mr. Ross, I am anxious to select this spot for a mission, and I am very happy that the chief magistrate of the district is here present himself, as well as these witnesses"—a number of half-breeds. Mr. Ross did not look too pleased. In fact, he was heard to say afterwards, "I told that fool of a Kirby [the Protestant minister] that this would be the best place for him to build a church." However, politeness is politeness, and first come first served is the rule in new countries. So Mr. Ross contented himself with remarking to the Bishop that it would be very hard to succeed in such a place, in the face of Protestant opposition. "They are rich," he said, "and you are not." But the Bishop replied, "Oh, we are accustomed to rough it, as you know. Besides, money is not enough in a country like this: to know how to do without things is of more importance." So was



ON THE MACKENZIE RIVER

founded this new mission, destined to be the mother house of the most northerly missions, and the beginnings of a humble see for Athabaska-Mackenzie, for whose formation into a Vicariate Bishop Taché was then negotiating in Rome. It was to be the home also of an orphanage and hospital for the poor and helpless Indians. On account of what he intended it to be for the Catholic religion in those almost inaccessible regions, Mgr. Grandin called it Providence Mission. So it is called still, or, since 1915, Notre Dame de la Providence. After a time, so many Indians assembled at the new missionary post that the Hudson Bay Company, too, made Fort Providence the successor of Big Island Fort.

August 6, feast of the Transfiguration, 1861, was the day on which Mgr. Grandin chose the spot on which was to begin the perpetual real presence in humble guise of him who shone upon Mount Thabor. Brother Kearney, who was voyaging with the Bishop, made a very high cross of wood during the night. In the morning, the Bishop said Mass in his tent, planted and blessed the cross, and then, taking to his canoe, continued his journey farther north.

It was only in the following summer—viz., on July 9, 1862—that Father Gascon and Brother Boisramé arrived at the foot of the Providence cross, to find it still in possession, and to begin something in the shape of a building. On August 12, they were joined by Bishop Grandin and Father Petitot, who afterwards reported the two pioneers as very busy cutting down trees, collecting the bark of the pines, and making provision for a season's fishing. The mission at that date consisted of the cross, a tent upon the long rocky shore, and scaffolding prepared for the work about to begin. The Bishop and Father Gascon soon went on down the Mackenzie, on their way to Fort Liard.

Three weeks later, the Bishop was back at Providence, to take a hand in the manual work himself, along with the Brother, and to leave Father Petitot free to study the Indian languages. By this time, there had been erected a log-house, 22 feet square, and a chapel, adjoining, 15 feet by 8. Whilst Brother Boisramé built the chimneys and windows, and put on the roof of hut and of chapel, Bishop Grandin, having no trowel or other implement, made mortar with his hands out of loam and mud, and with this he rough-cast and plastered the walls so thickly as to make almost a "mud-wall cabin."

By dint of hard work those workmen—who certainly

“needed not to be ashamed”—had their chapel ready for Mass on All Saints’ Day, November 1, 1862. In the baptismal register of the mission there is a touching record of the blessing of the chapel, in the presence of “a good number of Indians.” In reference to the blessed Sacrament, thenceforward to be always present, the entry continues to say that it will console them for sufferings which must continue, as well as for the four months of hard labour, from morning till night, the heat being very great, and the mosquitoes very troublesome, and the food very poor, and, in the end, the autumn rains having come, and the first rigours of winter.

On December 8, feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1862, Father Petitot and Brother Boisramé went back to Great Slave Lake, leaving the Bishop by himself at Providence with a boy (Baptist Pepin) thirteen years of age, and two hired Indians, “very exacting and idle.” The Bishop remained alone for eight months, creating the new mission, spiritually and temporally, out of nothing, by the labour of his hands, and with the assistance of God’s grace. He gave religious instruction; he hewed down the forest trees, which he and his lazy hired men dragged home over the snow. For washing or mending articles of clothing he had no assistance. When the winter was gone, and the ground no longer quite frozen, Mgr. Grandin varied his manual labour by laying out a little garden, digging and delving (to no great depth), and sowing.

On August 18, 1863, at three o’clock in the morning, two valiant comrades came to the Bishop’s relief. These were Father Grouard and Brother Alexis. Of the community life of these three during the winter of 1863-64, the following account has been preserved, written by Mgr. Grandin’s own hand:

“In my episcopal palace, so far, there is neither bed nor chair. We sleep in the attic, in a bed which gives ample room and verge enough for all four, since it is of exactly the same size as the attic itself. [The fourth was the young acolyte, Baptist.] We may be in want of some things: certainly not of holy poverty. We expected many things from St Boniface, but they have not come. Consequently, we have no tools, no writing paper, no altar breads (we are going to try to make some), and my own wardrobe is in a very unsatisfactory condition. Not one of us has a watch or clock. So we are all regulators. We eat when we are hungry. Our prayers and meditations last as long as our fervour, or rather as long as mine, since I signal the con-

elusion. The great difficulty is about getting up in the morning. If the Brother can see the stars, he can give a very good guess at the time. But sometimes there are no stars to be seen. Moreover, to see the stars, even in a cloudless sky, one must open one's eyes, and also go out of doors—no easy matter when one is sleeping in a cock-loft, and must come down by a rickety ladder. I think we rise pretty regularly between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. We burn fish-oil during our long hours of darkness. We use only one candle for Mass, and so we hope to have one all through the winter."

Sixty years later, Bishop Grouard, Vicar Apostolic of Athabaska, said of that winter at Providence: "We were never so happy in all our lives! You should have seen us climbing up our ladder made of rope ends, and then crawling on all fours into our place, perhaps one over the other. Sometimes a foot or leg went very far down through the ceiling—or let us call it the floor. Planks were liable to move a bit. They were not nailed down, for the very good reason that we had no nails. We laughed at all such accidents. What could be more amusing? In those days we ate dog, we ate crow, we ate other unsavoury dishes, and sometimes we ate nothing at all; but I assure you not one of us would have changed places with the Shah of Persia."

There was a great deal of hard work to be done in that winter of 1863-64. With the aid of a saw, a hatchet, and some wooden pegs, the convent orphanage had to be built for the Grey Nuns. Mgr. Grouard tells us to-day how the work went on. "Mgr. Grandin, in one of the islands, felled the trees. Then, with the help of dogs, he brought them to us over the frozen Mackenzie. Brother Alexis and I sawed them into planks. The next thing was to make them into a house, and to this work we all lent a hand, being helped by some of the men of the Company. When this new convent was finished, we, the builders, were ourselves amazed—to say nothing of the Indians. A house with an upper story! Was such a thing ever seen in the Far North? The Indians were quite frightened by the outer staircase. After much reflection, they climbed up on their hands and knees. After further reflection, they climbed down in a sitting posture. The unusual height made them giddy. When they saw us walking up or down stairs, they were lost in admiration of the cleverness of the Palefaces."

To this new convent, hospital, and orphanage, very much

improved in a later year by Mgr. Faraud, the Grey Nuns, the Canadian Sisters of Charity, came at last from the General Hospital of Montreal in 1867. They reached Providence on August 28, having set out from Montreal on September 17, 1866, and having wintered at St Boniface, and having left that place (for the last 910 miles of their route), in a downpour of rain, on June 8, 1867.

Father Grouard, writing from Fort Providence to Mgr. Taché, Bishop of St Boniface, on November 30, 1867, said: "I feel as if I may be dreaming when I see these Sisters here established in a convent. The holy audacity, the divine folly, of the enterprise takes away my breath. I certainly knew that Mgr. Faraud had gone south from Lake Athabaska to Lake La Biche [450 miles] to fetch them, but I never thought that the thing could possibly be done. I did not know how the poor nuns could survive the journey, or how they could ever live in such a place as this, if they got so far. Even now, when they have been three months here, I sometimes fear hallucination, so astounding is the event. In sober truth, such an event would convince an infidel of the existence of God, and the courage and devotedness of these pious women would make me ashamed of the slightest distrust in Divine Providence. Their presence here is a martyrdom in the literal sense of the word, a most emphatic testimony to the truth of the holy Catholic Faith. Un couvent de religieuses sur les bords du Mackenzie! Encore une fois, Monseigneur, je n'en reviens pas. C'est la fin du monde, or rather it is the beginning of a new world, a new creation, a new era that opens upon us in these barbarous wilds."

Something has already been told, in the volume *The Grey Nuns in the Far North*, of the foundation of the convent at Fort Providence. It has made a new world indeed, and half a century of religion and human kindness have transformed the "barbarous wilds." Thanks to the Grey Nuns, legions of little ones have been saved from death in those northern snows; they have been baptized, fed, and educated, especially in the knowledge of God. The nuns' half-century of devotedness, in a region where the helpless, the sick, and the aged were left to die, has transformed an icy solitude into a home of rest and happiness for the poor Indians when aged or afflicted. Their service of God and the poor for over fifty years in the Far North is a crown of glory for the religious congregation of the Canadian Sisters of Charity. Their voluntary isolation, their poverty, their mortifications, have brought down from

heaven abundance of graces, and an unfailing supply of vocations, in the houses of their Order far away from the Far North, in Montreal, Ottawa, Quebec, St Hyacinthe, and Nicolet, and wherever are found the spiritual daughters of the venerable servant of God, Mother d'Youville. Those devoted Sisters of Charity are a true glory of Canada. Very beautiful upon the mountains of snow and ice are the stainless feet of those brave and indefatigable workers who, with the priests and Bishops, bring the good tidings of God's grace, and preach peace, and promote the reign upon earth of the heavenly King.

A special guardian angel of the nuns and orphans at Fort Providence was Father Lecorre, who spent many years near them. He was ordained in that very place by Mgr. Clut in 1870. He made his Oblation in 1876, and he was in charge of the mission from that date until 1901. Although he lost his eyesight amid those snows, he is still zealously busy in many useful ways, in his retirement at St Albert. Many and varied are the services rendered to the Missions of Athabaska and Mackenzie by Father Lecorre, and they must keep his name for ever green in the memories of his brethren. To say nothing of the alms collected by him, it is enough to record that of the missionary Fathers now serving in the North, one-third, and of the Brothers one-half, have been recruited by Father Lecorre. Naturally, it was in his native Brittany—where, if the soil is stony, the heart is soft and strong—that this persuasive missionary found his recruits. They sang Breton airs as they shot the rapids, and crossed the great lakes, in the enthusiastic days of their youth and vigour, and even now, when they have grown perhaps a patriarchal grey beard, “still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,” or at least Breton, and perhaps in dreams they sometimes see, not indeed the Hebrides, but *le pays d'Arvor, la belle Bretagne, sous son ciel gris, avec ses fils chevelus, et ses champs de genêts.*

In July, 1895, Father Lecorre was the leader of an expedition on Great Slave Lake, which came very near a fatal ending. He was in charge of five young Oblates (or aspirants), two postulants for the Grey Nuns, four little orphan girls, picked up on the way, and five Indian oarsmen. The boat was a scow, a broad, lumbering, flat-bottomed vessel. It was loaded with all the goods required at the Providence Orphanage during the coming year. From Fort Resolution to Burnt Islands, the first camping-place, all went well. Father Lecorre thus describes the rest of the voyage:

“At three o'clock in the morning our guide, Alphonse Mandeville, roused us all. A favourable breeze had sprung up during the night, and we soon set off gaily, spreading our sail, and making for Dead Island to the north-west. Soon it appeared upon the horizon. We expected to be there in half an hour, and to light a good fire. But the wind rose and rose, and changed its quarters. Our scow began to drift towards (what is in literal truth) the open sea, and was rudely buffeted by the waves. We began to be anxious, for instead of drawing nearer to the land, we were gradually driven farther from it. Then thick clouds gathered, and a boisterous storm arose. The sun disappeared, and very soon we lost sight of the land also. A fog closed in upon us. We seemed prisoners within a circle from which there was no way of escape. Our oarsmen said, ‘We are lost.’ I feared it was too true, but I would not say so. I suggested trying with might and main to row towards the land. Oars were useless, I was told, against such fierce winds and such high waves. Our poor crazy, ill-jointed vessel, with every rise and fall, creaked ominously, as if going to pieces. ‘Unless God saves us, we shall be swallowed up in a few moments,’ said one of the crew. Then the lamentations of the young orphans were heard above the deep moaning of the waves. The rest of us were silent, and then we began to pray. We promised a rosary to Notre Dame de Lourdes. I made a vow to go on pilgrimage to St Anne d’Auray, by my brother Joseph as proxy. We did not lose our confidence in God, and our blessed Mother. I continued to pray all that mortal day, and all the following night, whilst we were terribly tossed and shaken, and only not lost. Father Vacher, and the two postulants, and the four children were very sea-sick, and perhaps their condition lessened their terror of death by drowning. I was sometimes almost in despair. The man who had spent most time at the helm was completely worn out. By means of a little compass which I had, we tried to direct the scow towards the north-west. When the second morning dawned, it was still blowing a gale, but the fog lifted somewhat. Nevertheless, we could not in the least tell where we were. In vain we searched the horizon all around: there was no sign of island or mainland. We continued to pump vigorously. All hands in the crew were perishing with cold. I myself was quite outworn with the mere anxiety, as well as weariness and watching. I had not really slept for some nights. I dropped off at last—into a dream. Perhaps it was for only the proverbial forty

winks, but I was moving joyfully along a green avenue, in a lovely and home-like country. Quickly I awoke to the sad reality. There was no land in sight. We struggled on as best we could, while the wind still blew. At last at midday someone saw, behind a bank of fog, what might be the hospitable shore. All eyes were strained in that direction. Opinions differed. But it really was the land, giving us promise of coming into safety, if not exactly into our desired haven, the harbour where we would be. God had saved us. Mary Immaculate had watched over us. By six o'clock in the evening we were once more saying our rosary together, but it was around a great fire, and on all the trees about us were garments hung out to dry. Our thirty-eight hours of distress were over, and we sang a *Magnificat* of thanks. We had been driven very far out of our way. We had traversed the whole expanse of that great inland sea, and so frail and unseaworthy was our vessel that we justly believed it was by a miracle we were saved from a watery grave. We continued our voyage with a good heart. On Tuesday, July 16, the feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel, we reached Fort Providence, where we found that the Grey Nuns had been praying for us, and burning a candle before the altar of our Lady, while the storm was raging, on the very day when we were in such fear."

Too many, and too prolonged to be recounted now, were the various trials of priests and nuns in the Providence Mission. There is some mention of them in the book about the Grey Nuns in the North. One short letter written by Mgr. Faraud to Mgr. Taché on November 12, 1869, may be quoted.

"Three times in two months the mission was near being reduced to ashes. On the first occasion, and the second, we were more frightened than hurt. But on the third we suffered an immense loss, and we barely escaped being left upon the shore without a roof over our heads. A pile of 1,800 planks or beams, about 35 yards from the house, was suddenly seen to be on fire, and a strong wind was blowing the flame this way. It is a miracle that the whole mission was not destroyed. The loss of the wood, collected with great labour, and at great expense, during two winters, throws back our building operations for years. To fire has been added, for our trial, a taste of famine. All through the summer we had to live on the fish taken from day to day, from meal to meal. Good Brother Boisramé kept out always eighteen or twenty nets, and by watching and

working day and night, he managed, as he truly says himself, to 'save the nation.' "

In 1869 it was still worth while to fish in the near neighbourhood of Providence, but afterwards the fishermen had to go up the Mackenzie, every year, to Big Island, in Great Slave Lake (forty miles away from Fort Providence) in order to try to make the necessary hauls of 25,000 for the two communities, the orphan children, and the sick. Hardships, disappointments, and accidents were the ordinary portion of those devoted fishermen.

There were two specially great disappointments. In 1885 and in 1904, the fish were not to be found in their usual haunts. Hares had to be caught instead—3,000 in 1885, and 8,000 in 1904. When the ice melted, the Mackenzie was almost flooded by the quantity of hare-skins thrown away. What they call a hare in the Far North—a little animal as light as a feather, white in the winter, grey in the summer—makes a wretched and insipid dish. To eat hare means in the Far North to be worse off than one who is reduced to eating *vache enragée*. However, such as it is, the white hare saves life. The 8,000 caught in 1904 saved the lives of 100 persons. And if hares could always be found in the Mackenzie, people would not die of hunger. The odour of the fir tree in the little creature's very sparing morsel of flesh would be willingly forgotten. But, alas! there are years when there are few hares or none. Every seven years they disappear completely. Where formerly there were millions, the hunter will not find in the woods enough to keep himself alive, and so he cannot dare to venture far away. After three or four years the hares appear once more, and gradually their numbers increase again to millions, after which in the seventh year they disappear as before, whether migrating or dying unseen who can tell? If in the same year reindeer, fish, and hare were to withdraw, or rather to be withdrawn, from the neighbourhood of Fort Providence, what would become of the missionaries, and the nuns, and the sick or aged Indians, and the children? But all these needy ones have a very lively faith in true Providence, and in the intercession of St Joseph, and, although they have suffered, their confidence has not been in vain.

Another of the Mackenzie, or Slave, Missions is that at Fort Simpson. The name recalls the famous Governor of the Hudson Bay Company, Sir George Simpson, "the Emperor of the North," as somebody called him. Fort Simpson is on the Mackenzie, where it receives its great



A CATCH UNDER THE ICE

tributary, the Liard, from the south-west. The voyager reaches it from Fort Providence after two days of rowing northward with the stream. As he approaches, he sees a tongue of land—really an island—which looks like the head of a colossal cross, whose arms are formed by the Mackenzie turning off to the right, and the Liard flowing in from the left. The company's trading post, a Protestant church and clergy-house, and the Catholic Mission command the whole scene, and are Fort Simpson. This is one of the posts where there is a resident Protestant clergyman. Our latest statistics (1910) give the total population of the place as between 250 and 300, about half of the number being Catholic.

Geographically Fort Simpson is the central post of the Mackenzie district. It was for long the residence of the chief factor of the whole district, and the most important post commercially. All the Company's barges, from north and south, used to meet at Fort Simpson in the long years before 1886, when the Company's first steamer ploughed its way so far north. Until that date the gatherings at Fort Simpson were just such as Bishop Grandin described when he visited the place in 1861. He wrote: "There are English, Orkney Islanders, Norwegians, and half-breeds (English, French, and other). There are Sauteux, Maskegons, Crees, Montagnais, Slaves, Hare-skins, Sékanais, and even some Eskimos. It is really the Tower of Babel over again."

Babel, or Babylon, indeed the post seemed to be to many heart-broken missionaries. This particular fort seemed to them to be the devil's own fortress of avarice, lying, discord, bigotry, and immorality. Father Grollier, afterwards "Martyr of the Cold" farther north, was the first priest to visit Fort Simpson, which he reached on August 16, 1858, not wishing to allow Archdeacon Hunter sole possession of the field. He had to leave on Saturday evening, the 21st, since the local competent authority of the Company so wished it, although the Indians begged that he might remain among them for the Sunday.

From that date, 1858, until 1876, the Catholic missionary could only pay a visit to Fort Simpson and live in a tent. A Protestant clergyman, and also a Bishop, had their own grounds, with residence and church. From Providence or Liard, Father Gascon for four years, Father Grouard for nine years, Father de Krangué for twenty-one years, used to preach an annual mission at Fort Simpson. As they remained only a month, and Protestantism was very influential during eleven months, the Indians in great

numbers became Protestants. When at last, in 1894, it became possible for one of the missionary Fathers to remain permanently at Fort Simpson, he found that his flock of (nominal) Catholics was only half the local population.

This first resident priest—the first to be nailed to the cross there—was Father Laurent Brochu. In ten years of prayer, patience, preaching, and self-sacrifice, he succeeded in bringing back many sinners to their duty and repentance. From Fort Simpson he used to visit also Fort Wrigley (north of Simpson), and Fort Nelson (south of Liard). From Fort Liard he wrote in 1895: “I spent the winter visiting the natives in their camps. I was greatly consoled for my many fatigues. Some pagan adults came from a distance for the Christmas festival. We had thirty at the midnight Mass, and forty at Mass on New Year’s Day. Some Indians, who had been excommunicated, made a great sacrifice, like ‘plucking out an eye, or cutting off a hand,’ in order to be once more at peace with the Church and with God Almighty.”

In 1896, Father Vacher was sent as socius to Father Brochu, and his pupil in the Slave language. In 1904, Father Brochu was transferred to a very different post, Hay River (south coast of Great Slave Lake). After two years there, his health broke down, and he was obliged to return to his native province of Quebec. But his memory remains very dear to his brethren of the Mackenzie. His successors at Fort Simpson, Fathers Andurand and Moisan, did so much good among the Indians there that probably the Catholics are far more numerous now than our figures of 1910 have told.

The Mission of Fort Simpson was dedicated by Father Grollier to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In 1916 the mission was greatly blessed, spiritually and temporally, by the foundation of a hospice for the aged and infirm, under the care of the Canadian Sisters of Charity, the Grey Nuns. This hospital was built by Fathers Andurand and Moisan. It is the highest and finest building in the Far North. It was meant to serve the aged and sick between Fort Simpson and the Arctic Ocean, and it was very soon filled. The erection of such a hospital in such a place was surely the most remarkable act of religious rashness ever accomplished or attempted by any Bishop. Be it remembered that there are no fish in the Mackenzie except at the foot of rapids which they cannot pass, and in certain inlets or outlets which are calm little lakes. So it happens that the nearest fishery to Fort Simpson is that at Big Island, Great Slave

Lake, 220 miles to the south. Now, on October 20, 1917—that is, in the second autumn after the foundation of the hospice—the boat coming from Big Island, with 9,500 fishes, was caught and imprisoned in the ice at a point 100 miles short of Fort Simpson. It might as well, and no doubt one day it will, be imprisoned at Beaver Lake, or even at Big Island itself, as many a boat of the Providence Mission has been. Let us try now to realize what it means, in such a case, to make so many double journeys over the ice with a little dog-sled, to bring away by degrees whatever it may be possible to save from prowling wolves and gluttons, and from biped thieves. If Providence Mission has so much to endure, because forty miles from its fishing-grounds, what will be the fate of the new hospital in the North, which is 220 miles away? But Mgr. Breynat and his priests and nuns make one ashamed of doubt or distrust, as if a necessary proof of little faith. Those hopeful ones, gifted with such ardent love of God and neighbour, in a land where the very soil is frozen hard, are evidently of the opinion of the late Father Rey, of Montmartre and Pontmain, who used to say that we ought “to provoke Divine Providence” to come to our aid.

A third Slave Mission is that at Fort Liard, on the river of the same name, near the Rocky Mountains, and the north-east border of British Columbia. From Fort Simpson the voyager rows up the Liard River, which is as broad as the Mackenzie itself. There is a wild grandeur in the scenes through which he passes—the windings of the great river and its rapids; Nahanni Butte, and the Rockies, sometimes quite near, and then again very far away; the wide views of dim distances; the woods of spruce, poplar, balsam, and white birch; the numerous small lakes, and muskegs, and islands, and tributary streams. Over many a long space this broad and strong river rolls so rapidly that we hear the stones rattling against each other in the shallows, and we see them on the banks in great heaps, reminding us of the metal on a country road waiting for the macadamizer. Against these strong currents voyagers can make head only by what is called tracking—i.e., towing the boat along by rope or chain. And when the current becomes a real rapid, doubly hard is the trackmen's work, as they ply elbow and thigh upon a high river bank, threatening at any moment to send them into the racing river from its grey shingles, or entangled brambles, or soft soil, or craggy gullies.

When all goes well, a week's hard work brings us in sight of Fort Liard, near where the Black River from the south-east joins the Liard. The distance from Fort Simpson is about 250 miles. Fort Liard stands out on the right bank of the Liard River in a rich soil, and against a background of forest which hatchet, and pickaxe, and plough will one day turn into fields as fertile as those of the Peace River prairies farther south.

The name Liard is a puzzle to many. One geographer at least has called it Laird, naturally imagining that it was a man's name, like Simpson or Nelson. If anyone succeeds in finding the word in a French or English dictionary, he must be told that he has not found the word he wants, because the fort has nothing to do with the very small French coin of the *ancien régime*. The liard is a tree which grows in great quantities near the Liard River. It is a kind of poplar, or balsam-poplar. In former times, a large liard stood by itself in the neighbourhood of the present fort. Round this tree the Indians used to dance, as if it were their maypole. Hence came the name Fort des Liards, and also another name. It may be of interest to mention that the missionaries have never tried to put down the dancing customs of the Dénés. The dances of the Red Men are not at all like the immoral dances of the whites and the blacks. Among the Indians, the men dance with men, the women with women. Or, if there is any mixed dancing, they merely join hands to make a circle. The missionaries have contented themselves with taking away all superstitious nonsense from the dancing customs to which the Indians are deeply attached. The Indians really must dance on their feast-days, or when they meet in great numbers. But no harm is done. They merely tire themselves out, and sleep the more soundly when at last they retire to rest. All the Indians take part in the dance, from the children to the old men. In a circle, they go trotting round and round a great fire, making hideous noises, and looking rather hideous themselves, especially in the light of the fire at night. They wear their blankets over their head, or wrapped about them. They are stooped, as they move and leap about, imitating the antics of the bear, which fills a great rôle in all their legends. To see their almost epileptic convulsions in this enjoyable pastime, and to hear their monosyllabic cries repeated by the echoes more and more loudly, will make one understand the word "savages." An eye-witness has told us of a circumstance which surely would of itself justify the violent exercise

called an Indian dance. When the dance is done, the snow all about the fire, or tree, is crawling with the personal companions which have parted company with their numerous owners. For this very good reason, the *Fort des Liards* was often known also as the *Fort des Poux*, the other name to which we have alluded.

But we are concerned with missionary work. Father Grollier was naturally grieved when, in 1858, the Protestant Archdeacon Hunter spent a month at Fort Liard. However, that zealous preacher did not make much headway with the Indians. Father Grollier had instructed several of them who were at Fort Simpson with the barges, and had explained the things that were likely to be said against the Church. He had seen also a famous Catholic virago named Houle, of half French descent. This woman was famous in the North, both in her pagan and her Catholic days. She was muscular, even before being a muscular Christian. She had been for long the Company's chief "bully" on the Simpson-Liard route. She was a terror both to whites and to Indians. She stood erect in the bow of the barge, and gave her orders to the crew, as one who must be obeyed, or she would know the reason why. She was clothed in deer-skin garments, and she always carried at her belt what might have been called her dirk, had she been a Highland heroine of Sir Walter Scott. She ought to have been called by some such name as Meg, though not Meg Merrilies or Wildfire. However, through our local authority, we know her only as "La bonne femme Houle." It is not surprising that she was not Madame or Mrs.; but was the "*bonne*" given by men afraid of being ruled, like her successive husbands, if not with a rod of iron, at least with a fist of iron? This sturdy woman never forgot what she heard her grandfather say when she was a mere child. He used to tell something of a religion which Blackrobe men would one day come to teach the Indians. No sooner had Meg heard that a Blackrobe (Abbé Thibault) had brought the Good Word as far as La Loche Portage than she left the Company's service, and set out for the far-off Red River, in order to find out all about her grandfather's religion. She returned from St Boniface a well-instructed Catholic. Four Grey Nuns, the pioneers in the North-West, had settled down at St Boniface, in poverty, not long before the first priest went so far as La Loche. The baptized half-breed woman, who returned to the North, was no longer a bully by name or nature. She continued, indeed, to carry her serviceable weapon at her belt, but she

became a model wife and mother, and as bold for religion as ever she had been for the fur trade, or paganism. With such an adversary, the hard-working Protestant clergyman evidently had no chance. In a little while he was Arch-deacon Hunted! When another minister, the Rev. Mr. Kirby, visited Liard at a later date, he had to meet the same champion of Catholicity, who lectured him very severely, and showed his error in introducing what someone has called the eleventh commandment in the Protestant religion, "Thou shalt not pray to Mary."

The valiant woman, with good Indian and good French qualifications, became more and more serviceable to the Church as she advanced in age. She was interpreter and sacristan for Father Gascon in 1860, when he made a stay at Liard. In 1863 she taught young Father Grouard the Slave dialect, and took care that his wishes were carried out by the faithful. She also explained to him the manners and customs of the tribe. She was not the author of the phrase, "Manners none, customs abominable." But she told of one abominable custom. Father Grouard asked her one day how it was that so many of the women had no nose. The explanation was very simple. They had not been good. Their husbands had been displeased with them, and had cut off their nose, just to teach them a lesson. Such was the custom of the tribe. As a matter of fact, some evenings later, Father Grouard was called out from his evening meditation by a piercing wail. A woman came running for refuge to the mission, with her nose and upper lip hanging upon her chin by a mere strip. Religion has been a great boon to womenkind in particular in the North.

Although Fort Liard is one of the Slave Missions, some members of two other Déné tribes from the Rocky Mountains were also to be found there in former times. These were the Nahanaïs, and the so-called Bad People (or *Mauvais Monde*), of whom Mgr. Grouard says, "I never met better people in all my life." Alas! both these tribes have disappeared, swept away by hunger and disease.

A letter written by Father Grouard after his mission at Fort Liard in 1867 gives us an idea of the need which the Indians had of the Good Word brought by the Gospel of God's grace, and also of the eagerness with which they welcomed it.

"There were forty baptisms at Fort Liard. Many Indians came to me whom I had not seen before, and God knows how much they needed the Good Tidings, which

ought to be brought to all the people. They were evidently drawn by God's grace. Their first word to me would be, 'I want to go to confession.' They had heard of confession to the priest. Therefore, without any human respect, and quite publicly, in the house of the fort interpreter, where I had found a lodging, they would say to his wife, 'Tell the Father that I have done so and so.' Several said, 'Tell him I have eaten such a number of people.' " It was the aged "bonne femme Houle" who was deputed to pass on these confidences.

As lately as 1890, Mgr. Grouard described the Slave Indians as stiff-necked, hard to convert, and quick "to return to their vomit." To-day there are 300 of them—all Catholics—at Fort Liard. The last Protestant minister left Fort Liard in 1892. He was a Mr. Marsh, a very friendly neighbour of the Catholic missionary, Father Gourdon.

Mgr. Grandin placed the Liard Mission under the patronage of St Raphael. It was served, from time to time, for three years by Father Gascon, and for nine by Father Grouard. In 1871, Father Nouel de Krangué became the first resident priest. He remained there, sometimes alone, sometimes with an assistant, for twenty-two years. His continual journeys between Fort Nelson, far south of Liard, and Forts Simpson and Wrigley, very far north, and his many privations, broke down his health, and caused him immense suffering. In the spring of 1893, Mgr. Clut, himself a sufferer, returning from Fort Good Hope, and on his way to Eastern Canada, found Father de Krangué at Fort Simpson, almost at death's door. He took him with him, intending that both should enter the Hôtel-Dieu at Montreal. Father de Krangué was not able to go any farther than Calgary (now the seat of a bishopric), in the south of the present prairie province of Alberta. There he was placed in the hospital kept by the Grey Nuns. Bishop Clut remained with him, and gave him the last Sacraments. Father de Krangué would willingly have seen his health returning, so that he might continue his labours where he was so much needed. But he soon died a holy death, after his holy, self-sacrificing life. After him came Father le Guen, as the missionary at Fort Liard, where he remained until, in 1915, he was transferred to Fort Providence. Father le Guen was the first white man to visit the Slave camp at Trout Lake, in the unexplored country east of Fort Liard. A few of the Indians there had seen a priest at one or other trading post, but most of them had only the very vaguest

idea of what was meant by the "man of prayer." Father le Guen was among them early in December, 1902. They received him as the messenger of God. Their aged chieftainess wept, as the missionary, showing his cross, explained to her about the Passion of Jesus Christ. She was baptized on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. And there are still other such souls of men and women, waiting for some large-hearted, self-denying Blackrobe to appear among them in the still unknown regions of the vast Vicariate of the Mackenzie !

Other priestly labourers at Liard have been Fathers Ladet, Lecomte, Gourdon, Gouy, Vacher, Moisan, and Bézannier. Father Moisan is the champion of the Mackenzie Missions, so far as mutilation counts. Bishop Breynat lost one toe at Lake Athabaska, but Father Moisan lost two at Liard. It was on his own feast-day, the feast of St Francis Xavier, December 3, 1906, that he got frost-bitten. He had been fishing at Lake Bovie, twenty-five miles east of the fort, for there is no good fishing in the Liard, any more than in the Peace River. He was coming home with the last portion of his winter supply of fish, trotting after the loaded dog-sled, when he stumbled into a muskeg or fen. The water quickly froze on his feet, and although he was only three miles from home, his haste did not avail him. His right great toe and its next neighbour could not be saved. Father Gouy had to cut them off with his pen-knife, after the victim had been suffering for a month.

CHAPTER XIX

THE MACKENZIE: THE SLAVE TRIBE—*Continued*

FORT NELSON, where there is another mission (called St Paul's) for the Slave Indians, is on the left bank of Fort Nelson River, in the north-east of British Columbia. This river, coming from the south, enters the Liard River at a point about fifty miles to the south of Fort Liard. The further distance of over 100 miles has to be covered before the Liard missionary finds Fort Nelson, where several streams join this principal tributary of the Liard. These 150 miles are very trying on the voyager. On both rivers the canoe is going against the stream. The Nelson is not so broad or rapid as the Liard, but its perpetual windings are the rower's despair. When one travels the same route in the winter season, the river valley is full of snow so deep and so soft that it has to be trampled more than once in front of the dog-sled.

The banks of the Nelson, which are high and heavily wooded, and of a dark, rich soil, are constantly changing their bounds, under the pressure of the melting snows. Great masses of earth, with all that grows upon them, tumble into the middle of the river. These land-slides block up the stream in one direction, and form new islands around piles of fallen trees. These new islands will be covered with growing pine and liard, while the fallen trees of the foundations are quite visible still. Then comes an unusually strong current which sweeps away the whole island bodily, and either adds it to a headland lower down, or distributes it in pieces over some islands which have been able to "keep a firm grip of their holding." In this wild part of the world, one is inclined to think that Nature has not yet finished laying her own foundations; what a modern man calls (by a contradiction in terms) *évolution créatrice* is still going on.

But to return to Fort Nelson. It takes the place of Fort Halkett since 1867. We have said in Chapter XV a word about Hell-Gate and Fort Halkett, which Father Gascon visited in 1862. Another fort, longer abandoned than Fort Halkett, is the Old Fort of the North-West Company, of

which the ruins may still be seen amid brushwood, half-way between Liard and Nelson, on the right bank of the Nelson River. To this Old Fort there came one day some Indians (Slaves and Bad People), who told the *bourgeois* in charge that they had killed a number of reindeer for the fort. He paid for them, and sent his men far away to collect them. When the men were gone, the Indians killed the *bourgeois* and his wife and children, and pillaged and burned the fort. Later on, according as the men came back, they too were all killed. The Old Fort was never rebuilt.

Fort Nelson, as has been said, dates from 1867. Father Grouard, in 1868, established a mission there under the patronage of St Paul. The Indians whom he found at that resort were Slaves and Sékanais. The Déné tribe of the Sékanais have their hunting-grounds on both sides of the Rocky Mountains, so that they are under the care of the missionaries both of British Columbia and of Mackenzie. One may really admire among them the "noble savage." They would have made a very fine Christian people if, when numerous, they had found a priest acquainted with their own language, which is of kin with the Beaver dialect. Those Sékanais, whom our missionaries met at the forts on the Peace and Nelson Rivers, were instructed by means of interpreters, and were baptized. There were only a few families of them. At the present time there remain at Fort Nelson about 250 Indians, all converts and fairly good Catholics.

But their conversion was at the price of "many a sorrow, many a labour, many a tear," on the part of their missionaries. Hardly had Fathers Grouard and de Krangué gone from among them than someone (apparently an Indian "prophet") was found to say to the poor Indians: "Look at these figures on the picture-book the priests have given you! These men in the nice gowns are beautiful [certain heresiarchs]; they will go to the beautiful land on high. Those others in the black gowns are like the mischievous crows; they will go to the fire down below, and the Slaves and Sékanais who listen to them will go after them. Take my advice, my friends. Never mind the Blackrobe. Go to that man of prayer who is dressed like other fine gentlemen."

The Indians naturally did ask for a Protestant minister, and the local official of the Company, Mr. Brass, backed up their request, all the more willingly because he wished his children to have a good opportunity of learning English.

Father de Krangué was at Fort Liard when this news about Fort Nelson reached him in the summer of 1878. He was soon joined by Father Lecomte, who knew English fairly well. Mr. Brass, too, was at Fort Liard at the moment. To him the offer was made that in the autumn Father Lecomte would go to Fort Nelson, and teach school in French and English. Mr. Brass accepted most willingly. "He gave me a warm shakehands," said Father de Krangué, "and assured me that Father Lecomte would spend a happy winter with him at Nelson." The English clergyman was not invited.

Henri Lecomte is said to have been another John Berchmans: an angel at prayer, a man at work, a child at play. He is more than thirty years dead, yet when his name is mentioned now in presence of Indians, traders, or fellow-missionaries, their faces brighten as if in a new vision of the "Happy Warrior." It was in the Grand Seminary of Laval, in 1874, listening to Mgr. Faraud, that he heard and felt his call to the North-West. He met with opposition from his Bishop and others; but he was allowed to go. He made his noviciate at Lachine, near Montreal; he was professed at Lake La Biche; he was ordained priest (October 28, 1877) at Fort Providence by Mgr. Clut. Supposed to be in 1878 the socius of Father de Krangué at Liard, he began in reality a ten years' residence at far-away Nelson, from which he paid a visit to Father de Krangué once or twice a year. During those ten years, he converted the Indians, who were nearly all still pagan when he settled down amongst them. In 1880 Father de Krangué wrote: "At St. Paul's Mission, Fort Nelson, good is being done gradually, thank God. Father Lecomte is loved by all the Indians. He is full of zeal, both in study of the native language and in the sacred ministry. He is a great worker, of most cheery social intercourse as a confrère, and an exemplary Religious of angelic piety. He lives on very little, and is always happy."

Father Lecomte picked up the Slave language very quickly. The Indians, with surprise, declared that he spoke it with more ease than themselves. He composed a Slave dictionary, which is still highly valued. He spoke English so well that on special occasions, such as Christmas and Easter, the Protestant officials of the Company used to go to hear him preach. There was music on those occasions too. The missionary had no harmonium, but he played on his guitar, and, in a most musical voice, he sang hymns in English, French, and Slave, to the great delight of the faithful, and the unfaithful, of Fort Nelson.

Both his continuous labours, and what we call accidents, brought many sufferings upon Father Lecomte. Writing to Mgr. Clut at the end of 1880, he said: "On November 9 I met with an accident, which will have serious consequences, I fear, all the rest of my life. With the hatchet I gave my knee a deep gash—the same leg which I hurt in 1877, on Great Slave Lake, in your own presence. Though nearly two months have passed, I am only beginning to walk a little. The knee is still swollen and very weak. I fear the nerves and bone are seriously injured. Even for a genuflexion at the altar I can bend the knee only very slightly. It seems that my old-time activity is over. But may God's will be done."

Five years later, in the winter of 1885-86, Father de Krangué, at Liard, being dangerously ill, sent for Father Lecomte to give him the last Sacraments. Two young Indians brought the message to Fort Nelson, and they persuaded the priest to shorten the journey by avoiding the river, with its many windings, and making a bee-line through the forest. They said they would take him to Liard in six or seven days. The three travellers started, carrying their provisions, blankets, hatchet, and gun. After two days' march they found themselves on the bank of the Deer River, a small tributary of the Fort Nelson River. So far all was well, and according to plan, although the march over the snow and through the brushwood had been very fatiguing. The travellers therefore crossed the frozen Deer River, and marched on for four days more. At the end of the fourth day they recognized that they were back again at the little Deer River. The Indians, by some unaccountable error, had moved round in a circle. It was a terrible moment. The travellers were nearer to Nelson than to Liard, after six days of a frozen march. The provisions had run very low. Yet to return to Fort Nelson was impossible, since Father de Krangué was dying, and counting the hours until his brother priest arrived. The young men promised to be courageous. They re-examined the route to be taken, and all set off again. But they grew weaker and weaker. One evening, there remained for supper only the entrails of a hare, on whose flesh and skin the three travellers had made their breakfast and dinner. While the Indians, with what little strength they had, were preparing the night encampment in the snow, Father Lecomte, who was a very good shot, went some distance away, taking the gun, and the last two charges. He saw a hare—only the third seen during the long journey. He took aim and pressed

the trigger. The gun missed fire. Now unsteady, and fearing to fail in his last shot, he fired, but the hare scampered away. Immediately the two Indians, hearing the report, came in all eagerness and joy through the thicket—something to eat at last! Oh, what a disappointment, what a depth of desolation, when they saw the truth! That night one of them went out of his mind, and, at furious intervals, wanted to kill the missionary. For three days more the march had to be continued without anything to eat, and in the company of a dangerous lunatic. At length, on the eighteenth day out from Fort Nelson, Father Lecomte said to his companions, “Now I see where we are; stay you here; I will press forward to Fort Liard and will send you relief.”

He arrived that evening, looking like a ghost, and hardly able to stand. He collected his strength sufficiently to tell where the two Indians might be found, and then fell in a faint on the floor. Father de Krangué, who had recovered from his illness, now had it in turn to do something for his well-intentioned friend.

The extraordinary hardships of that journey to Liard shortened the life of Father Lecomte, whose physical strength, indeed, had never been equal to his high and courageous spirit. A final stroke was inflicted on him in the spring of 1888—final and fatal, although the sufferer lingered. All through the winter of 1887-88 Fort Nelson had “fasted.” The moose were plentiful, as usual, but it was impossible to get near them, because every step made a crackling sound upon the snow, partly frozen after the passage of the warm chinook wind. Father Lecomte and his host, Boniface Laferté, had lived on squirrels during the winter at Fort Nelson. In the season when the bears come out of their torpid, or hibernating, state, a famished family from the Rocky Mountains came to throw themselves upon the charity of Father Lecomte. He went into the woods, killed a bear, quartered it, and was carrying it home on his shoulders, when, as he hurried, he made a false step, and ruptured a bloodvessel in his chest. He was spitting blood when he arrived. The wound never completely healed. Any violent effort reopened it. Eventually it turned into a tumour in the region of the heart.

Nevertheless, for four years more, Father Lecomte continued to be an intrepid voyager, and to preach the Gospel to the poor Slave tribe, no longer, however, at Fort Nelson, but farther north, at Forts Liard, Simpson, and Wrigley. In his cup of sorrows—which he so resignedly drank up—

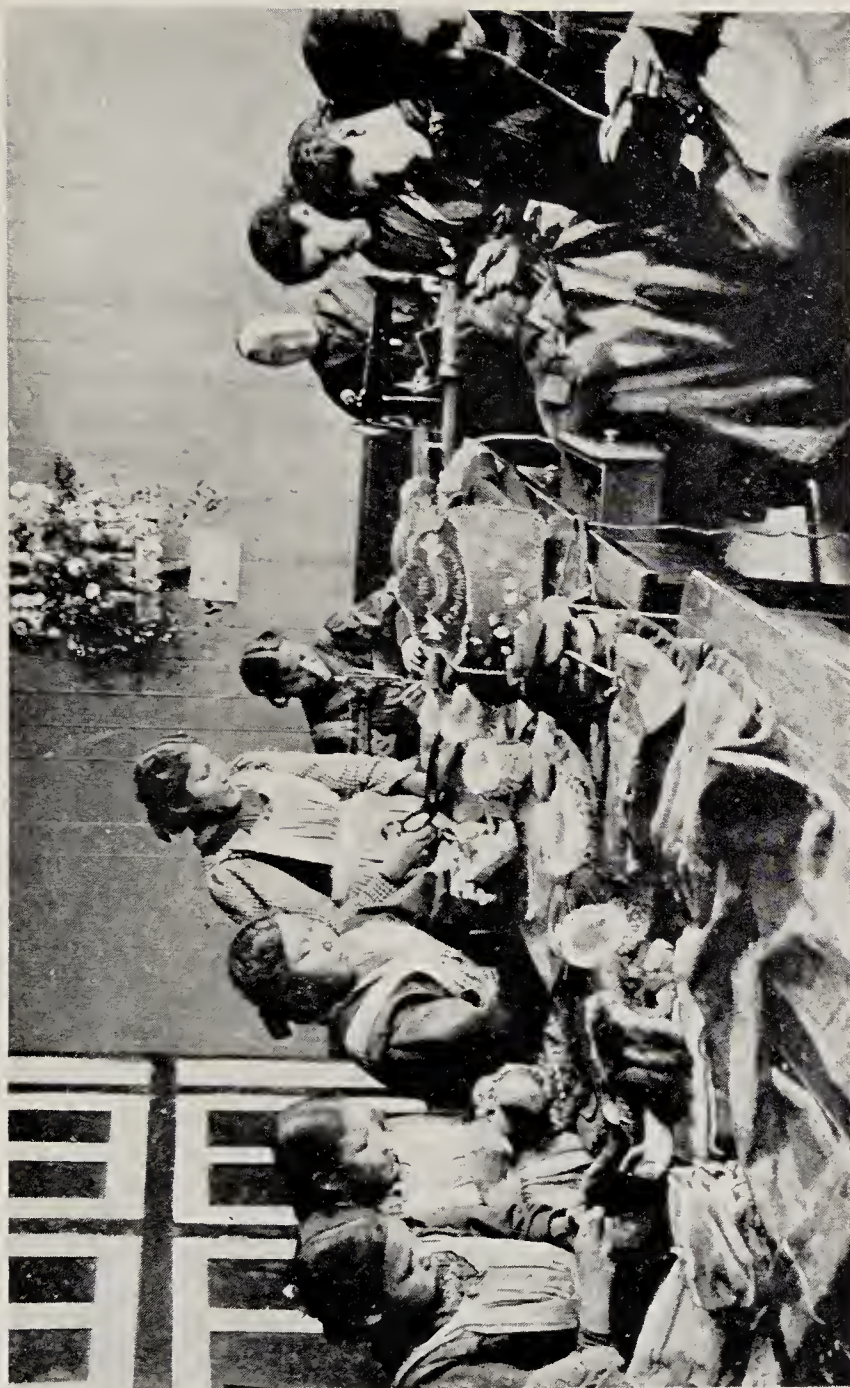
he found one very bitter drop at Fort Liard. He built a house there with his own hands, and he helplessly watched it being reduced to ashes in one half-hour.

In 1892 he had finished his course: his well-filled day was done. He could not eat anything except rice, and there was no more at Fort Providence, where he had been spending some time. The least noise seemed to be splitting his head, but, in order to procure medical treatment, he had to travel 1,000 miles in barges and carts, hearing the roar of rapids, the racket of oars, the ear-splitting creaking of carts, and the not too quiet or polished language of boatmen and carters. To reach St Albert from Providence took him a month of real torture, but he remained always cheerful and resigned. At St Albert he found doctors, nursing Sisters of Charity, and the kindest of Bishops, Mgr. Grandin. But it was too late; nothing could be done for him; on September 16, 1892, Father Lecomte died a holy death. He may not have known the precise words of a certain hymn, but its prayer had been his:

“Abide with me, fast falls the eventide: . . .
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.”

We have connected the name of Father Lecomte chiefly with Fort Nelson. The mission there continued to have its trials after he had left in broken health. In February, 1890, Father Gourdon set out from Fort Liard for Nelson. The snow was so exceptionally deep that all his dogs perished before he completed the journey. In the early morning of the feast of the Sacred Heart, June 7, 1890, Father Gourdon was roused from sleep by the chopping of waves about his bed. The melting of the snow, in the neighbourhood and in the Rockies, had caused a flood. The priest had not very much time to lose. Taking his gun, so as to signal for relief, he climbed into a pine tree. There, 130 feet above the ground, he had to watch the waters carrying away, pell-mell, all the firewood which he had collected for the winter, and then his sled, and, in fact, everything except his house itself. When he had fired a few times, the gentleman in charge of the neighbouring fort, who had himself taken to his boat, came to the rescue of the priest.

After such a flood, Father Gourdon did not expect the Indians to visit Fort Nelson that season, so, after setting his house in order, he returned to Fort Liard, intending to be once more at Nelson in the autumn. On July 16, 1890, as he was walking in front of the mission at Liard, he noticed a little box floating down the river from the south. He



AN INDIAN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL

sent a young Indian for it, who soon brought it to land. It was the tabernacle from the altar of the little house at Fort Nelson, which Father Gourdon thought he had locked up so securely. Evidently the rains had brought on a second and greater flood, which had made a clean sweep of the house. The missionary got a canoe ready, and started up the river to Fort Nelson. As he went, he found several pieces of his portable property. An old soutane was hanging on the top of a tree; a bell, and the monstrance in its box, were on a ledge of rock; elsewhere lay three candlesticks, and two parts of the kitchen stove. At St Paul's Mission itself (Fort Nelson) everything had disappeared. There was so little sign of house and chapel that the priest might have said, *Etiam periere ruinæ*. He found among the Indians a Relic of the True Cross, which they had picked up somewhere. They were using it in their favourite game of chance!

After Father Gourdon's experiences of Fort Nelson, it was granted to another—viz., Father le Guen—to have the consolation of completing the conversion of the Indians frequenting that post. He accomplished it by twelve continuous years of journeys, and labours, and patiently borne sorrows. When he handed over the work to Father Moisan, in 1909, there was only one unbaptized person at Fort Nelson.

There remain two other Slave Missions, about which just a few words ought to be said—viz., Hay River Post and Fort Wrigley. At Hay River we are back once more at Great Slave Lake. The trading post or fort is at the mouth of the Hay River, the future harbour, no doubt, of many vessels on the Great Slave Lake. The Catholic mission there (called St Anne's) was founded by Father Gascon on July 3, 1869. He and Brother Hand were glad to find on their arrival a little hut built for them the previous winter by Brother Boisramé. They themselves now, with the help of some Indians, built a chapel. Brother Hand had been the faithful coadjutor of Father Gascon at Fort Resolution for four years. At Hay River, on August 23, 1869, the Brother was early afoot, and after his morning prayer and meditation, whilst waiting for the appointed hour for Mass, he visited the nets which he had spread in the lake. At six o'clock, Father Gascon heard shouts, "The Brother is drowning." He had disappeared, and his upturned canoe was floating on the tranquil waters of the lake. His body was found next day. Father Gascon noticed there was blood, but he thought of nothing more than a drowning

accident, although Brother Hand was a perfect sailor, and had often crossed the lake in a birch-bark canoe, when winds and waves were high. The Indians present at the funeral gave no information to Father Gascon, but, at a later date, they told Father Gourdon that one of them, shooting at a wild duck, had so wounded Brother Hand as to knock him out of the boat. Father Gascon missed the Brother so much that, after a few months, he returned to Fort Resolution, where he spent the Christmas of that year (1869). From that date until 1878 Hay River was visited occasionally. From 1878 it was almost abandoned, partly because the few missionaries were so overworked, and partly because the Slave Indians there were so hard to convert. In 1893, the Indians themselves having asked for a Protestant minister, the Rev. Mr. Marsh settled among them. In 1894, Bishop Grouard called at Hay River, intending to preach a mission, but the Indians refused to receive him.

In March, 1900, Father Gourdon, accompanied by Brother Rio, arrived at Hay River, with the intention of remaining, and of recovering inch by inch the ground lost. He found in the whole camp only three faithful Catholics—three aged half-breed women. All the rest attended the Protestant church, where they told their beads, whilst the minister preached to them in English. The position of the Catholic missionary in such a place is a hard one. The poor Indians see no harm in saying to him, "If you do not give me tea, and tobacco, and clothes, I must go to the minister for them: he gives me all I want." For over twenty years now, Fathers Gourdon, Gouy, Brochu, Frapsauce, Dupire, Vacher, and Bousso have taken care that the Hay River Indians are not left without a resident priest. In 1910, it was reported that the general population of the post was about 140, half Protestant and half Catholic. Ten years later, it was said that the Catholics were the more numerous—eighty against forty. Presumably, the general population had been thinned by death, as so commonly happens in the Indian camps of our time.

The last Slave Mission we have to mention is that of Fort Wrigley, which is on the northern boundary of the hunting-grounds of this tribe. Wrigley is 145 miles farther north than Fort Simpson. It is on the right bank of the Mackenzie, at the foot of hills, which shut out the view to the north and the east. Just opposite is an island, which makes the Mackenzie in this place no longer look what it

really is, the Giant River. Farther away—that is, on the left bank—are more high hills, which hide the Rocky Mountains from our sight, though we know they are there, in their majestic whiteness. Only looking up the river—i.e., towards the south—is there a view to a far distant horizon. Fort Wrigley has some charms for a poet or a hermit. It is a sure home of solitude and perfect peace; of silence also, except for the noise of a rapid quite near the mission-house. At the head of this rapid, the poetical hermit may admire a petrifying spring, and if he crosses to the island already mentioned, he will find a fountain of hot water flowing in this land of frost. We owe this description to Father Gouy, who became the first resident priest at Wrigley in 1897, when he placed the new mission under the protection of our Lady of the Sacred Heart. But in the description which he then wrote he now makes a slight change. In 1910 the mission followed the fort to the other side of the river, where the broad Mackenzie spreads out just before it rounds the legendary “*Rocher qui trempe à l’eau*,” a conical rampart 500 feet high, whose cracks and crevices seem to have been forming since the world began, and whose massive strength still seems to say, equally to the mountains and to the river, “Thus far, and no farther.”

Fort Wrigley is a place of such wild beauty that a missionary might declare that “every prospect pleases.” He would not add that “man is vile,” but only that his fate is very pitiable. When Father Ducot, from Fort Norman (much farther north), visited Fort Wrigley in 1881, there were 300 Indians there. In 1915 there were only seventy. Famine and epidemics had done their work amongst them. Before long, an Indian will be as rare on the Fort Wrigley banks of the Mackenzie as “on the shores of Manhattan.”

CHAPTER XX

FORT NORMAN: THE HARE-SKINS

FATHER PETITOT called the Hare-skin Indians the Neapolitans of the North. After the taciturn Montagnais, the quietly happy Dog-ribs, the unconcerned Slaves, the new tribe gave the missionary a great surprise. He found "those good-natured, though ugly, Hare-skins" excitable and demonstrative, as lively and frisky as a flight of wagtails. "They are as sprightly as Neapolitans," he wrote, "as talkative as Jews, as homely and friendly as children." Later visitors give the same account of this particular tribe of Red Men. How little it takes to make one happy! If the rich white folk, trying to force a laugh at some expensive entertainment, could only see the gay and laughter-loving Hare-skins in rags, enjoying their poverty and their snow!

These Indians do now wear European rags, but of old they wore the exceptionally warm and comfortable clothing which gave them their name. From head to foot, in Samoyed fashion, they were costumed in hare-skins, bound on with belts of the same material.

There are two Catholic Missions in the lands of this tribe—viz., at Fort Norman and Fort Good Hope. The distance between Fort Norman and its southern neighbour, Fort Simpson, is 350 miles—the longest stretch of spiritually empty country in all the North. Fort Norman, and the little Catholic Mission of the place (called St Teresa's), occupy a majestic position on the Mackenzie. This great river on its way north from Fort Simpson has had to conquer three separate mountain ranges, sent out from the Rockies as if to bar its passage to the Arctic. It has also forced its way through the many spurs which, from the Laurentian table-lands on the east, shoot out to meet the Rockies. Becoming again free of those obstacles, it rolls along rapidly, and stretches out more and more widely for the fifty miles still to be covered before it reaches Fort Norman.

This Fort, which is on the right bank, looks across the broad majestic river, and over the snowy foot-hills (appearing

to be foaming waves), and gazes in admiration upon the high white crests of the Rocky Mountains.

Half a mile farther down the river, a blue and crystal and cold water comes into the Mackenzie. For long it breasts the turbulent muddy river, with hope to keep its own clear, sweet waters separate and pure, but only

“Till the old flood claims both his banks once more.”

The new waters which the voyager sees have come from Great Bear Lake, and, as Great Bear River, they have skirted upon their right a chain of hills, suddenly ending in a high cliff, which towers over this meeting of the waters.

This Bear River is a perpetual terror to Blackrobe voyagers. In its eighty miles of length, it descends no less than 200 feet. Shooting some of its rapids, the voyager must lean heavily on a pole, which he presses against the reefs, and unless his arm is very steady he is sure to be swept away and dashed against the rocks. A skilful canoeist can come down the whole length of the Great Bear River in half a day. But to return requires weeks of forced labour.

Great Bear Lake is even larger than Great Slave Lake, and either is larger than all Wales. Sir John Franklin's estimate of Bear Lake was 150 miles from north-east to south-west, and 120 miles from north-north-west to south-south-east. The lake's five bays (Keith, Smith, Dease, MacTavish, and MacVicar) have been compared to the radiating arms of a starfish. From a vessel in the centre of the lake one may look right into the heart of all those bays, and realize what freedom there must be for all the winds that blow, on this great inland sea, where there are no islands and no breakwaters.

Great Bear Lake is fed by forty different rivers of clear water, and its depths of crystal transparency, above its granite bed, simply teem with fish. The salmon-trout of the lake is very large. Herrings pass in millions into Great Bear River, the only outlet of the lake, and their quality is much improved by the perpetual icy freshness of both lake and river. The waters become frozen to a depth of from seven to twelve feet, and it is only in mid-July that the ice breaks up. At no time of the year is the lake quite free from wandering icebergs. The shores of Great Bear Lake, at ordinary times, seem to be the home of death: the rendezvous of icy blasts, and barren strands, and prolonged winters. Nevertheless, as the reindeer pass, those shores are swarming with life. Dog-ribs, Slaves, Hare-skins, and even Eskimos, incessantly come and go about the borders

of the five great bays, seeking the game which God sends them in due season.

The Indians of Fort Norman (who are of the three tribes mentioned, but mostly Hare-skins) live by the chase, and by fishing in Great Bear Lake. The missionaries, therefore, have been accustomed to visit their camps near the lake, or in the woods on the banks of Great Bear River. From 1864 to 1872 Fort Norman was on the west side of Keith Bay (the source of Bear River), near the ruins of Fort Franklin. This old Fort Franklin was built for the North-West Company by the famous explorer, Sir John Franklin, in 1825, in his second overland expedition. His name still haunts the place, and all the frozen North, since it was discovered at length, by Sir Leopold McClintock, in 1859, how the *Erebus* and *Terror* of the third expedition had fared, and how Franklin himself had perished on June 11, 1847.

The Indian camps in the neighbourhood of the Franklin-Norman Fort were visited eight times by Father Petitot between 1866 and 1878. He used to journey on snow-shoes from Fort Good Hope by way of Lakes Faraud, Kearney, and Pius IX (350 miles), and to return by canoe on the Bear and Mackenzie Rivers (260 miles). Many other missionaries visited the same camps from the present Fort Norman, and from the same place a missionary will continue to visit them occasionally, as long as Indians remain there on the shores of Great Bear Lake.

The present Fort Norman is on the site where its predecessor was in 1859. Father Grollier was the first priest to visit that place. He was on his way much farther north to Good Hope. He arrived at Norman on August 29, 1859. He baptized some children, and gave the name of St Teresa to the mission. He returned from Good Hope on June 5, 1860. The Company's officials were then changing the fort to Castor-qui-déboûle (not yet named, in either English or French, on the map), and on June 14, 1860, Father Grollier was taken by them in their barge for a two days' journey to the new site. This new Fort Norman was visited by Bishop Grandin in 1861 and 1862, and by Father Gascon in 1862 and 1863.

Then came a great flood which drove away the new colony. Fort Norman was transferred in 1864 to the Fort Franklin site, already mentioned. But in 1872 it was brought back to its old site, where like some "genius of the shore," on its high headland, it now stands on guard above the meeting of the Great Bear River with the Mackenzie.

Fort Norman is one of the northern posts in which there

is a resident Protestant clergyman. But of the Indians in the place, two-thirds were said to be Catholics in 1910. The great modern missionary of the Fort Norman district was Father George Ducot, who devoted to it no less than forty years of his priestly life. He was a native of Bordeaux, from which his wealthy parents sent him much help for his mission. They also beautified his church, but he would accept nothing for himself. He was a student in the scholasticate at Autun in the days of the Vatican Council, and the Franco-Prussian War. After his ordination, he was sent to the Mackenzie missions. He arrived at Fort Good Hope on September 14, 1875. There he spent six of the winter months with Father Séguin and Brother Kearney. On March 20, 1876, he left them for his new post. From Fort Good Hope, pushing his sled over the ice hummocks of the Mackenzie, Father Ducot arrived at Fort Norman on March 28, 1876. He had brought with him two hatchets, three saws, and eight nails, with which to build a house and a chapel.

As he fully expected, everything had to be done at Fort Norman. The mission had to be built up, materially and spiritually, from the bedrock. In the near neighbourhood was a Protestant schoolmaster, favoured very naturally by the officials of the fort, and surrounded by a certain number of Slave Indians, whose relations at Fort Simpson were counted as Protestants. The Hare-skins of Fort Norman were, of course, influenced by the views of their Indian brethren of the other tribe. Father Ducot spent seventeen years among them, all by himself. He journeyed much between the camps of his immense district. After seventeen years he was helped, at one time or another, by Fathers Gouy, Audemard, Gourdon, Andurand, Houssais, and Frapsauce. The result, under God, of the labours, instructions, and prayers of the missionaries was that the pagan Hare-skins became fervent Christians, and the primitive log-cabin became the beautiful church of St Teresa. Father Ducot, very talented and very energetic, would have managed with great success a very large parish in Europe or America. He most joyfully gave up his forty years of priesthood to the evangelizing of a small number of poor Indians, to be seen only at rare intervals, in small groups, scattered over a wide and wild land. Some of the known facts of his career show him to us as nobly true to the motto, "To preach the Gospel to the poor he hath sent me."

Father Ducot visited, in 1879, a Dog-rib camp on the shores of Great Bear Lake. The Indians begged him to

come back the following year to complete his praying and preaching amongst them. It was agreed then that the chief, Little Dog, would meet the Blackrobe at Fort Norman on March 1, 1880, and guide him to the camp. The chief was in time, but Father Ducot was not. He was accustomed at that date to spend the three or four months before March at Fort Good Hope, and in his return journey to Fort Norman he was delayed by such a blizzard as he never saw before or after, and by various other obstacles "of the devil's own making," he used to say. He reached Norman only on March 10. Little Dog was gone. He had waited patiently for four days, until all his provisions were eaten. Then he started back for his camp, after leaving a written word to be given to Father Ducot. In this he assured the man of prayer, on the word of a chief, that the whole camp would wait for him for a moon and a half, that the distance was only five days, and that the chief would blaze and mark the trail so well with fir branches that there would be no fear of going astray. After Mass on the feast of St Patrick, March 17, 1880, Father Ducot loaded his sled with provisions for seven days, harnessed his four dogs, and with his young Hare-skin serving boy, Alphonse Koutian, he was soon lost in the forest.* In two hours he was literally lost, for there was no trail to be seen. But young Koutian said, "Never fear: I am an Indian, and I know my way." They went on. In two days they were at Kraylon (or Willow) Lake, which on snow-shoes may be reached in twelve hours from Fort Norman. An old Slave Indian, Bechletsiya, who was fishing at Kraylon for the people of the fort, advised the priest not to go on, as the late snow-storms had buried the trail out of sight. But Father Ducot was most unwilling to disappoint his faithful people, and the boy was full of confidence in himself.

They went on. But the old man was right. There was no trail. At every one of the many lakes which had to be crossed, there was marching here and there, and round about, to try to recover some idea of the direction. Snow was falling, and the air was bitterly cold. For eleven days the brave priest and his boy marched. The provisions for the dogs were all gone, and of those for the two travellers very little was left. The eleventh evening, the dogs had for supper the reindeer sack which had held the portable chapel. Next morning, three of the dogs died in the traces. The voyagers therefore *cached* the sled, and its contents, and their blankets. Thinking the Indian camp must be near, they took with them what food still remained, and marched

on through a white and silent forest which seemed a messenger of death. The fourth dog, affectionate little Fido, followed them. In the afternoon a beaten path was found. Forgetting their fatigue and hunger, the voyagers hurried on. But the Indian's eye, searching the trail, could find no new footprint. Evidently the March snow had not fallen there, and that was all that could be said. Not even far away was a child heard to cry, or a dog to bark. There was death-like silence. Still on they go, the two exhausted travellers. At five o'clock they are in the Dog-rib camp. But it is empty. Not a soul to be seen, and nothing left behind. And there is a coat of hoar-frost upon the ashes. "They are gone this long time," said the young Indian; "and they were fasting before they left." Father Ducot was in the very same case as François Paradis in the Canadian novel, *Maria Chapdelaine*: "he had lost his way in the snowfields." Still for him it was not yet the end.

With feverish eagerness, in the failing light, the missionary searches for some sign left to show him in what direction the camp had moved—a twig bent and pointing, a fir with a notch, or a spruce with a written word. There was no sign whatever to be found. Twenty different trails, none of them fresh, led out of the late camp, some to Great Bear Lake, others in the quite opposite direction. What was to be done? There were two pounds of dried meat left, and one pound of flour. There was not a hare in the woods, nor a wood-hen. Father Ducot was afraid that to continue the search for his poor flock would be suicidal, tempting God. But the young Indian was still confident, and wished to go forward. "We are too far away now to go back," he said. "Let us pray to God to guide us," said the priest. It was Holy Saturday, and the sun had set. Kneeling in the snow, the missionary and his Indian boy gave their thoughts to the Master of life lying in his tomb, and begged him to preserve them from death in the forest and the snow. They appealed also to Mary Immaculate, Maria Desolata.

Father Ducot rose up and said: "Let us rather turn back. We can get as far as the cache. Suppose we find nothing to eat on our way. Well, having my chapel there, I will say Mass for the last time, and give you Holy Communion, and we shall die together. God will not allow the wild beasts to eat our bodies. The Indians will find them when coming again to Fort Norman. They will pray for us, and will carry our remains to be buried in the cemetery which I have blessed beside St Teresa's Church."

"Father," said the boy, "what you tell me now makes my heart strong. We will return; the Dog-ribs are now too far away for us to find them."

In the starry night, saying the rosary aloud together, they went back upon their own tracks. As the way was now plain, they went with great haste. Little Fido still followed. Early on Easter morning they came to the cache. They were so exhausted that they could not bite upon the last morsel of pemmican. They ate instead one of the altar candles of reindeer tallow. Then, after a prayer, the priest told the Indian to sleep, and when he woke up he would have to kill Fido, and they would eat him. The Indian fell asleep. Father Ducot did not. Their case seemed utterly hopeless. They were at a distance of nine or ten days from the mission, and there was no hope of help any nearer. The priest began to blame himself. Was he not responsible for the loss of his companion's life as well as his own? His knees knocked together, and he trembled all over. He seized his Oblate's cross, and kissed it, and begged Christ crucified to come to his assistance, and, for the love of his Sacred Heart, to hear his prayers, and the prayers of the Indians of our Lady of Good Hope far away, who in the holy season were praying for the missionary of St Teresa and his people.

Father Ducot then fell fast asleep. Some noise awoke him from what had seemed many hours of delightful dreams. The sun was mounting high, and the Indian was chopping wood to make a fire. When he saw the priest move, he asked if Fido was to be killed. The answer was, Yes, that there was no help for it. Father Ducot covered up his head, for he could not bear to see the hatchet fall on the poor creature, which had so loved his master's voice.

A portion of Fido was eaten for breakfast, and was relished. But suddenly Alphonse grew almost sick under the influence of what may be called remorse. Oh, what had he done in a moment of forgetfulness and hunger? The traditions of his race were too strong for the young Christian. What a curse had come upon him! A Déné had eaten dog! Inevitably, the malediction of the powerful Evil One, Yedarieslini, would fall upon himself and upon all the Dénés. He would not touch the dog meat again, or carry any farther what remained of it. Father Ducot understood the Indian mind too well to remonstrate at that moment. Taking his chapel on his own shoulders, he was able to carry also just so much of poor Fido as would serve for two meals. In the Easter Sunday evening bivouac, while they cooked in melted snow fresh meat of dog for one, and a piece of dried meat of deer

for the other, they sang together those Easter hymns, with Alleluia, which Bishop Faraud had printed in the Montagnais language. Then the priest said: "My child, on this great festival of the Church, and of the whole world, we too must have a feast. We have been praying all day as we came along. We have sung our hymns. We have been fasting enough. Now we must feast." So saying, he threw into the boiling water—in which the remains of dog and deer were dancing—his last handful of flour, and his last candle.

After this feast, and a night's rest, Easter Monday saw the two travellers afoot once more. For three hours they had been trudging along, the Indian with his keen eyes searching all the woods for any sign of life, whilst Father Ducot meditated sadly on the prospect of seven more days of isolation and fatigue, though he had not quite food enough for one day. Suddenly, in a glade among the forest fir trees, they saw an enormous wolf tearing something, with teeth and claws. They clapped their hands. The wolf made off, and the travellers turned aside from their path to find still in being the half of a moose-skin. The skin had been stolen somewhere by the wolf, which in a little while longer would have swallowed the whole of it. The voyagers fell upon their knees as they exclaimed with one voice, "Thanks be to God."

On the leavings of the wolf they lived for three days longer. Twelve hours after the last morsel of the skin was eaten, they came upon the remains of a camp where they had noticed nothing particular on the outward journey. Alphonse, examining the snow, happened to kick some object frozen hard. It turned out to be a moose bladder, full of blood. It is one of the superstitions of the Hare-skins that, when they are lucky in the chase, they leave the blood by itself, to be found by the wolverene (carcajou), in whose good graces they always seek to stand. The blood discovered by Alphonse in the snow kept the travellers alive for another day's march. An ounce of arnica ointment, divided between them, was all that they had to feed upon for one other day. It was now Friday evening and they had nothing whatever left, when they found themselves once more at Kraylon or Willow Lake. The old fisherman, Bechletsiya, and his wigwam had disappeared, and had left no traces. All around, the forest seemed asleep: there was a silence that might be felt. Father Ducot was praying to heaven, and invoking in particular St Benedict Labre, when the young Indian, who had gone to a little distance, shouted, "Dogs barking!" In as great haste as snow-

shoes would allow, the exhausted voyagers rushed forward, and in a few moments they were thanking God that all their privations, disappointments, and anxieties were over. The old fisherman, when about to start for Fort Norman, two days earlier, had, to his great surprise, killed three fine moose. There had been no time yet to smoke or save them. There, before the eyes of the famished travellers, was their ruddy and juicy flesh. Of course, the Indian fisherman (supposed to be a Protestant) entertained his two guests in princely style, as became a lord of the forest. The next day, he would not allow them to go until the afternoon, so that he might feed them still better, cooking for them himself two extra good meals. Then, giving a good and precious load to Alphonse, he begged the missionary to remember him in his prayers. To give, to be generous, evidently touches the heart of the giver as well as the receiver. Bechletsiya took a new interest from that moment in Father Ducot, who after a little while baptized him, and gave him his first Communion, and in a few months prepared him for death.

The Fort Norman missionary and his boy at length reached home on Low Sunday evening at ten o'clock.

Such is, in outline, the touching story related by Father Ducot himself when asked what he considered to have been his hardest experience or his narrowest escape. He said that his acquaintance with hardship in the North had been fairly extensive, but that perhaps this fruitless search for a Dog-rib camp might hold the record. And then he said: "Is there not a special Providence for fools? Do you think my adventure qualified me for entry in that list? Ah, well, never mind! *Nos stulti propter Christum*. We missionaries have had reason to believe that there is a special Providence for us, at all events."

Four years after the hardships through which a special Providence had carried Father Ducot, he spent over a month in the Dog-rib camp near Great Bear Lake. His missionary work of that period was summed up in twelve confessions, five first Communions, and the baptism of a sorcerer. But he felt as happy as the successful European missionaries who evangelize great crowds of the sinful and the devout. He had gone to the camp on foot, on snow-shoes. He began the return journey, with some Indians, on a raft, on the Great Bear River. The first evening, they camped out on the right bank. In the morning, it was found that dogs, passing in the night, had eaten the thongs tying the raft to the bank. The raft, with all its provisions and

implements, had been carried away. To avoid dying of hunger, it was absolutely necessary to get to the left bank, so as to be able to reach Fort Norman. But the Indians suddenly remembered that a shaman, or medicine-man, had foretold that a springtime would come when they would be drowned while descending the Telini-dieh (the Bear River). The missionary had all the trouble in the world to give them a little courage, and to convince them that God was more able to save than the medicine-man or the devil was able to drown. On a solemn promise to be brought safely to St Teresa's Mission at Fort Norman for Sunday, they consented to move on. For four days all tramped along down the right bank, over mossy rocks and mouldering logs, over cliffs and tributary streams, "o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent," by the side of the raging river, which was rolling many blocks of ice from Great Bear Lake. At last, at the head of a rapid, there seemed to be a complete bridge of ice, the pledge of deliverance. Making the sign of the Cross, the voyagers ventured upon it. It was not a solid bridge. It easily gave and trembled under the feet. Each one advanced very cautiously, feeling his way with a stick. After three-quarters of an hour of such an anxious procession all had leaped in safety to the solid earth of the opposite shore. They were not to die of hunger in the wilds! Whilst they were still heartily thanking God, there was a sudden sound as of thunder in the gorge. The ice-bridge had broken up, and was racing in mighty fragments down the rapids!

Father Ducot paid another visit to Great Bear Lake in 1886. He told the Indians there that for the first time he would keep Christmas that year at Fort Norman, and there would be midnight Mass. The Indians take special delight in the Christmas religious festivities. The priest in December was making all possible preparations for the approaching festival—making candles, and such garlands, and lamps, and other decorations as could be provided. Unexpectedly one evening Chief Little Dog and his band arrived, and knelt to shake the priest's hand, and to ask his blessing. Father Ducot said he was delighted to see them all at Fort Norman. The chief replied that they would be always true to their word, and so they had come for the great midnight religion and prayer, which they were told was to be the day after to-morrow. They had made a mistake of a week; but when Father Ducot said so, there was consternation. "We have no food with us," they said, "and we cannot stay longer than two days."

“But, my children, I cannot keep Christmas Day before the time,” said the Blackrobe; “the Pope would be displeased with me.”

As it happened, Father Ducot was rather particular about rubrics. But we do not mean to insinuate that other priests, either at home or abroad, easily drive a coach and four through such narrow paths and hedgerows. At all events, the rubrical Father Ducot found himself in a difficulty amid the lamentations of his Indians.

“Listen to me, Father,” said the chief; “the priest is like God Almighty; he can do great things, he can do what he wishes; we are all here, and we have come so far, and for only one thing, for the beautiful feast of the midnight; how can you refuse us?”

So the Blackrobe, after reflection, said he would content his good people; he believed the Pope would give him authority, if he could only see him; he would write to the Pope. “As it is now late, set up your camp and retire. Confessions to-morrow. To-morrow night we shall have the great Christmas festival.”

Great was the joy of the Indians, as they withdrew, shouting repeated *Mercis* or *Marcis*.

Next day Father Ducot decorated his chapel very well, heard the confessions of his flock, and recommended them to pray much until Mass time. In those days there were no timepieces among the Indians. Midnight for them was anywhere between 9 p.m. and 3 a.m.

At half-past eight, Father Ducot was asked if it was yet time for Mass. But he sent word that the bell would be rung, and that he would not begin until all the people had come in. Still some of them, for fear of being late, lay down to rest in the chapel. At length, Father Ducot rang his bell, and lighted all his (reindeer) tallow candles. All the people were soon inside the large hall, or body of the church. The usual curtain was still drawn across the sanctuary. When it was withdrawn, oh, what a glorious sight there was before Indian eyes, as the people knelt in prayer! Lighted candles covering the altar, and overflowing even to the credence table. Never had so many lights been seen together before. There were as many as two dozen!

The Christmas hymn was sung in Montagnais (a translation of *Il est né, le Divin Enfant*). And the Indians have wonderful lung power, and they love the hymns. Next came the sermon—the Christmas sermon—taken in with all ears and mouths and eyes. After the sermon, more hymns, sung with increasing enthusiasm. Next came the

solemn Mass—votive of the Immaculate Conception. For *Gloria* and *Credo* vernacular hymns were chanted. All the people received Holy Communion. Mass was followed by benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and a concluding hymn. The grand midnight celebration had lasted three hours.

Little Dog said, "Did I not tell you that the priest was all-powerful?" But we have not found any record left by Father Ducot to say what he "wrote to the Pope" by way of explaining how the first Christmas duly honoured at Fort Norman fell upon December 17, 1886. All the Dog-ribs moved off that same day, very happy indeed, and yet very sorry to have to leave the mission.

Father Ducot was always very precise and punctual, as about rubrics so about all matters of duty. His sermons were prepared with remarkable care. And he preached in the same burning words, whether he addressed fifty persons or ten, or perhaps, like Dean Swift, some "Dearly beloved Roger." Father Ducot had the natural eloquence of a son of Gascony, but what was more important—he revered his ministry. His carefulness in writing his sermons, and his success in bringing religious truths before the minds of his hearers, may perhaps fairly be judged by the following interesting passage which we copy from the little diary which he kept at Fort Norman:

"November 21, 1909.—Last evening, about ten o'clock, we saw a magnificent aurora borealis. Two immense jets of light shot out from the distant horizons—one from the north-west, the other from east-south-east. Curving profoundly, they advanced to meet each other, and were made one in the zenith. They formed a gorgeous white rainbow, dividing the heaven into two unequal regions. At either end of the great bow, rivers of light were outpoured, which grew and grew, in breadth and in height, until they met on high, and the immense rainbow was three times, five times, larger than in the beginning. It seemed to be one diaphanous veil, hanging from very heaven, and whose fringes swept our earth. As this diapered, elastic, veil swayed this way and that, in the strong breeze from opposite quarters, its festoons were more closely gathered, and again more widely spread, and then lengthened into fiery darts and steely edges of flame. One felt that the earth might be struck at any moment by a great blaze of lightning, with a crash of thunder. And all this marvellous exhibition of the Northern Lights was so near us that I fancied the points touched the roof of our house. On a sudden the bow begins to melt into the azure; the light passes out towards the north-

east and the south-west; the suspended curtain is torn, and its glories disappear, falling down, or mounting on high, and strewing the vault of heaven with patches of light. In half an hour our aurora borealis was a thing of the past. The stars and the low-lying moon shone in an absolutely cloudless sky. Our centigrade thermometer marked 35 degrees of frost."

It would be a mystery if anyone living the life of priest or Religious in the frozen North were not heavenly minded and devout. Nevertheless, it is worth saying, about this particular missionary of Fort Norman, that there was a special grace or unction in his piety. "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." Brother Beaudet, who had seen him at his religious exercises for eighteen years, tells us that he never saw him seated or leaning in the chapel. He loved with filial tenderness the religious congregation to which he belonged. Its feast days, its anniversaries, its works, its Superiors, were present to his heart in his lonely hut or snow-drift. With what tears of joy he kissed the hands of his Bishop, whenever the blessing of his presence came to St Teresa's of Fort Norman! In the spirit of Pope Pius X, the pious Father Ducot taught his Indians to receive Holy Communion as frequently as might be possible in their particular case.

In the forty-first year of his truly apostolic ministry this "workman needing not to be ashamed" had to be withdrawn from the post of duty which he still loved. Mgr. Breynat brought him south to the new hospice at Fort Simpson, where he found his former pupil in the ministry, Father Andurand, and his aged Hare-skin Indians, all under the maternal care of the Grey Nuns. But rest on earth is not meant for the missionaries of the poor. Father Ducot closed his earthly career that same year, dying on Lady Day in August, 1916.

It may be thought we have said much about one mission. Yet so much has been omitted! And now, perhaps, the old pioneer days of Fort Norman may be ending. One of the Oblate Fathers wrote from that post on February 17, 1921: "It seems as if we were going to have a great change, and a terribly quick change, all around here. There may be another Klondike rush. But whereas gold was found on the Yukon in 1897, it is for petroleum, and for various minerals, that adventurers are now coming here. In the depth of winter they have come 1,300 miles to stake out claims. Though mineral substances abound, some of the new-comers will no doubt be cruelly disappointed. By the way, though the miners are coming, the missionaries are not!"

CHAPTER XXI

FORT GOOD HOPE: THE HARE-SKINS—*Continued*

THE second Hare-skin Mission is at Fort Good Hope. Dauntless were the hearts of those explorers who named the place, at least as brave as those other descendants of Japheth who first doubled the southern point of Africa. Fort Good Hope is perhaps 400 miles northward, down the Mackenzie, from Fort Norman. It is the border post on the frontiers of the daylight and the dark, and the mission there has been called our Lady of Good Hope.

Right in front of the mission we see the Giant River forcing its way to the Arctic through giant surrounding, overhanging ramparts, with their bastions, and battlements, parapets, and angles, and towers, like the defending walls of some mediæval city. By three successive rapids—West Mountain, East Mountain, and Sans Sault—the wide waters of the Mackenzie have been carried with might to this stage in their course. Here, bursting from out their granite prison, they are spread abroad in majestic grandeur at the foot of Good Hope.

A never-to-be-forgotten scene in this Far North is such a one as we find thus described by Father Petitot:

“On June 7, 1865, at six o'clock in the morning, there were tremendous explosions, and an ear-splitting infernal din. The deep ice had broken up. The sights and the sounds made one think of the end of the world, or of the primitive chaos come again. We see a monstrous, shapeless mass of gigantic rocks of ice, as high as the houses; we hear them roaring, grumbling, groaning, moaning, howling, as if some prehistoric living creatures again roved the earth. Raging, or, in simple, majestic, irresistible power, these great rocks move onward, grinding to powder the lesser blocks upon their path, and then are broken to pieces upon the sides of colossal icebergs still greater than themselves. In the river now flowing, many a block is swallowed up for a time, reappearing lower down, where it lifts up, and casts away with force, some smaller floating fragments. It needs little imagination to fancy life in those

massive, invincible, moving beings, now let loose over the world: they turn about and jump, they hustle and jostle and join in one, and vault over, and hold possession of, those that go before them. The river is here two miles broad, but in places that bed is too narrow, and the icebergs build themselves upon the banks in ramparts of Cyclopean masonry. Still they move, they plough and dredge the soil, heaping it up into great mounds, hollowing out new and wide channels, and overtopping the rocks with a manifestation of power which is really frightening. These icy masses look like mad elephants, tearing through the jungle, overturning and crushing everything in their path; or like titanic iron-clad locomotives, joining their panting breasts to sweep away by main strength every obstacle to their headlong course; or like an avalanche from the Alpine heights, growing as it descends, and carrying away rocks, forest trees, and the habitations of men. Such is the great *débâcle*—what the Indians call the *U téwé*—of the Giant River of the North. This terrifying and grandiose spectacle, this abnormal condition of the Mackenzie, lasted for three days of June, 1865."

After this description, no one will be surprised to read that the first Fort Good Hope was swept off the face of the earth by such an icy deluge. That old fort was built much farther north than its present successor. Its site is still marked on maps at about 100 miles north of the Arctic Circle. The new fort stands a little to the south of that circle. The old fort was destroyed in 1836, and in the same year the new one was built in its present position on a table-land fifty-five feet above the river level, where until now (and no more can be said) it remains safe from the depredations of the melting Mackenzie.

A visitor to Fort Good Hope, when he looks northward, may imagine the Arctic Circle just five minutes away. On the south there is a hill which intercepts his view of the red half-circle on the horizon, which for a few moments casts some rosy rays on the desolate banks of the Mackenzie. From November 30 to January 13, the sun is never seen at all: Fort Good Hope is left to its long Polar night.

During that night of forty-four nights, are seen the glories of a firmament such as we never know in our latitudes. There is a moon which never sets; a multitude of stars twinkling as if alive and musical. There are the ever-varying repetitions of the aurora borealis; the magnificent flying streamers, banners, and pavilions of the Northern Lights. Such streams of light, made more brilliant by the intensely

cold, clear air, turn the long night into a day; *nox sicut dies illuminabitur*.

From January 13 till the vernal equinox, the newly risen sun, in his few and chilly hours, beautifies his throne with meteoric robes of state. He is crowned with silver halos. Seen through the glittering crystals of the sleet, he gives the northern world a view of many a parhelion, or mock-sun, himself the centre of three, or six, or even eight, all as brilliant as himself.

When the equinox is past, the sun takes leave of the horizon, exulting as a giant to run his course. For five months the sun's rising and setting are almost one, and Fort Good Hope enjoys one long day of 150 days. A few miles farther north, within the Arctic Circle, there is no sunset at all: in that particular time and place, the sun does not "know his going down."

One long night and one long day make a year for the Hare-skin Indians, and also for the Loucheux and the Eskimos.

The apostles of the Hare-skins of Good Hope were Fathers Grollier and Séguin. When Mgr. Taché, Bishop of St Boniface, paid his first visit to London in 1856, Lord Colville, on behalf of the Hudson Bay Company, invited him to found a mission at Fort Good Hope. Unfortunately, he had no means of doing so at the time, no matter at what sacrifice. It was only in 1859 that the Mission of Fort Good Hope at length was founded. Father Grollier began the work there, at great cost to himself; Father Séguin took up the work from Father Grollier's hand, and bravely held on, and completed it.

Peter Henry Grollier, with his heart of fire, was the Francis Xavier of the frigid zone. Born in Montpellier in 1826, he was (like Moses) seen by his parents to be "a proper comely babe," but as delicate as he was comely, and very unlikely to be an apostle of the North-West, and its Red Indians. When he entered the Oblate noviciate of Notre Dame de l'Osier, in Dauphiny, his fellow-novices considered that this elegant city youth would get on well enough in the sunny south, and amid the olives of Provence. They did not know what he was writing to his Superior General, the founder. His motto was *Da mihi animas*, and his desire was to be a missionary, not only of the poor, but of the poorest.

The founder, Bishop de Mazenod, ordained him priest on June 29, 1851. A few months later, having consecrated Father Taché Bishop, to receive the onerous inheritance of the apostleship of the North-West, he gave him, for one

of his assistants, Father Grollier, "a treasure specially dear to his own heart."

Father Grollier, like his model, St Francis Xavier, had an apostleship of only twelve years. But he, too, in that short time ran a long course, visited many tribes, and with fervid zeal carried them captive into the Church. In 1852 he was at Lake Athabaska (Nativity Mission, Fort Chipewyan), to help Father Faraud. In 1853, having learned the Montagnais language, he founded the Mission of the Seven Dolours, at Fond du Lac on the same lake. On four different occasions he returned to Fond du Lac, to make a long stay each time. In the second of these journeys he contracted a malady which brought his career to its premature close. He was going on a sick call to a great distance, the sick Indian's son being his guide. When they were two days out from the fort, they met some hunters who told the priest that there was no need to hurry, as the man was out of danger. Father Grollier was very glad to hear this, as he had promised the Indians to be back at the fort for the feast of the Ascension, which would be in three days more. Therefore, he told his guide to go on, and to tell his father to expect the priest the following week. As for himself, he protested that he did not need the guide, since he would be going back upon their own trail. But, as he went on, he found that the snow had melted, and there were no tracks to be seen. He came to a certain little lake—since then called the Father's Lake, though perhaps not yet officially named. There he lost his bearings completely, and for a day and a night he went round and round, without making any advance. After that day and night, what happened next he could never remember. The rest of "the tale half-told" we owe to that worthy man, the half-breed, Joseph Mercredi. He was one of the officials of the Company at Fond du Lac, and always the devoted friend of the missionaries. Seeing that Father Grollier had not returned to the fort for the feast of the Ascension, he became uneasy. Still he waited another day, but no longer. He got a number of Indians together, gave them guns and tom-toms, and instructed them what signals to make while beating the bush in all directions, and to fire a volley when they had found the priest. It was Joseph himself who found him. For two days he had sought in vain everywhere, searching every bush, examining every tree. Then he came upon the fresh footprints of a bear, which he followed up. In the distance, he saw a black object, huddled up, lying

under a tree. It was the bear, he thought, still enjoying its dormant state. He raised his gun, but before he could fire, he noticed a movement in the black mass, which showed it was no bear. He advanced cautiously, and found Father Grollier in his soutane, without his reindeer garment. He was moving his arm to and fro in an unmeaning way before his face. Evidently he had eaten one of his moccasins: there were bits of skin between his teeth. He was quite unconscious, and emaciated to the last extreme. Joseph succeeded in making him swallow a little fish-broth. Then he made a fire, brought him near it, and rubbed his limbs. Father Grollier's life was saved; but he did not regain the use of his mental faculties for a fortnight. From that date he was afflicted with the asthma which made the rest of his short life a martyrdom.

In 1858, still full of courage and zeal, he left Lake Athabaska for Great Slave Lake, where, on July 22, he gave a fixed "local habitation and a name" to St Joseph's Mission, Fort Resolution. Three weeks later, the Company's barges arrived from the south, bringing Father Eynard and also a Protestant missionary, Archdeacon Hunter. Father Grollier left Father Eynard at Fort Resolution, and took passage himself by the same boat as the Archdeacon. Proceeding north, he founded the Mission of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Grande Ile (Big Island), and the Mission of the Sacred Heart at Fort Simpson. The Archdeacon could not well object, but his friend, Mr. Ross, the chief factor at Fort Simpson, would not allow Father Grollier to go farther north. He sent him back to Fort Resolution. Arriving there, he learned that a round-robin had been sent by the traders to Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson Bay Company (in London), begging him to keep the priests out of the Mackenzie district, and to reserve it for Protestant clergymen. Father Grollier, as soon as possible, wrote to Bishop Taché to do everything in his power to hinder the success of this petition, and he claimed for himself the privilege of going as far north as any human being might go. A whole year of uncertainty and anxiety followed these two appeals. While waiting for the decision, Father Grollier continued to evangelize the Yellow-knives and Montagnais of Fort Resolution. In 1859, on April 12, he set out, across the frozen Great Slave Lake, for Fort Rae, where he founded St Michael's Mission for the benefit of the Dog-rib tribe. On May 10, 1859, he came back, still along the ice, to Fort Resolution.

On the conclusion of that last painful journey, something happened which, by Father Grollier's orders to good Peter Beaulieu, remained a secret until lately, when Mgr. Breynat told Beaulieu that he was not bound by his promise. What seems to have been scurvy had affected Father Grollier's feet. The livid nails only partially adhered to the flesh. They quivered so, when the sufferer walked, that travelling was impossible. Father Grollier obliged Beaulieu to remove all the nails with pincers. Each separate operation caused much bleeding. When one foot had been done, the victim called for a drink of water. Then he presented the other foot, turning away his head a little. At the last nail but one the poor sufferer said in a weak voice, "Oh, how you hurt me, Peter!" When all was over, he said, "Thank you, Peter."

In due course, the barges came once more from the south to Fort Resolution. Oh, happy day! There were two letters for Father Grollier. One was what might be called a *passe-partout* from Sir George Simpson. The other was—in the spiritual order—a similar commission for the Farthest North from Mgr. Taché. The same day, August 13, 1859, Father Grollier took his place in the same barge as the Rev. Mr. Kirby, who was going north to relieve Archdeacon Hunter. At Big Island and Fort Simpson Father Grollier rejoiced to find his Indians very faithful to their promises. At Fort Norman he founded the Mission of St Teresa.

On August 31, 1859, Father Grollier reached Fort Good Hope. He found that some Indians whom he had instructed at Fort Simpson the previous year, and also some of the *coureurs des bois* with whom he was friendly, had given some information about the Catholic religion to the Indians of Good Hope. Hence the visit of Archdeacon Hunter, in the spring of 1859, had not made much impression on them. Father Grollier called his mission our Lady of Good Hope, and made his preparations for offering up that pure oblation and sacrifice which, as announced through the prophet of old, was to be offered to God's name in every place, and from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. The priest was allowed to use the table which had served the Archdeacon for a Communion table, and so he turned it into an altar, and on September 2, 1859, he said the first Mass ever said in such near neighbourhood of the Arctic Circle. "What a joy!" he wrote; "what a day of all days! The Lamb of God immolated almost on the boundary of his inheritance; the ends, or uttermost parts, of the earth given as his possession!"

The asthmatic missionary continued his apostolic labours for three years more, with indefatigable zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. The saintly Bishop Grandin said that Father Grollier's zeal surpassed all his other virtues, and that he sometimes did things which no Superior would have recommended beforehand, but which God Almighty turned to good account. "The success of our missions on the Mackenzie is in great measure due to him."

Father Grollier was reproached with being too uncompromising, but he maintained that the truth always is. "I come from Montpellier," he said, "where people know how to keep awake. I arrived at Fort Simpson on August 16, the feast of St Roch, 1858. That sainted fellow-townsmen of mine left Montpellier and his native land, to become a mendicant pilgrim, and the devoted servant of the plague-stricken. In my own vocation I thought there was resemblance enough to his to make me rejoice in the coincidence of his feast-day with my arrival in that new and difficult post of duty."

Father Grollier was particularly zealous in preaching the Catholic Faith to such Indians as had heard of Protestantism. For that purpose, he went south to Fort Norman in June, 1860. From that place he went on to Fort Simpson, and made an arrangement with Father Gascon for the benefit of the Fort Liard Indians far away. Then away from Simpson to the Farthest North, passing far beyond Norman and Good Hope, and the Arctic Circle, and even old Fort Good Hope, and stopping only at Fort MacPherson on the Peel River, which enters one of the mouths of the Mackenzie, 280 miles to the north of the Arctic Circle. At Fort MacPherson, he was very glad to be before any other preacher. Farther north there is only the frozen ocean or the Pole. Reaching MacPherson on the feast of the Holy Name of Mary, he placed his little attempted mission-station under the protection of that name.

At Fort MacPherson Father Grollier found some Loucheux (Squint-eyed) Indians and Eskimos, who at this time, as usual, were enemies one to another. The first Blackrobe seen there brought them all together on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 14, 1860. He got the two chiefs to join hands in his at the foot of the Cross, and to kiss the feet of Christ's image in token of reconciliation and friendship. "Thus (he wrote) the Cross was the bond of union between one whose home was by the Mediterranean and those who dwell upon the frozen shores of

the Polar Sea. The Cross has dominion *a mari usque ad mare*. I gave the Eskimo chief a picture of the Crucified on which I had written, *Viderunt omnes termini terræ salutare Dei nostri*. I gave the Loucheux chief a picture of our blessed Lady with the words, *Beatam me dicent omnes generationes*. On this beautiful feast of the Holy Cross, the first-fruits of the Eskimo nation were gathered into the Church, and several of its members became the children of God by holy Baptism."

In the winter of 1860-61, Father Grollier acknowledged, in a letter from Fort Good Hope to Mgr. Taché, that his health was almost as bad as could be, yet he added that he meant to visit Fort Norman in the spring, and to come back as quickly as possible, and then to pay another visit to Fort MacPherson, when the Indians left Good Hope. He carried out this programme, but at what cost to himself! He wrote on June 8, 1861: "Yesterday I took the barge at Good Hope for Fort Norman. To-day, whom should we meet but Mr. Kirby! [the Protestant clergyman]. He is on his way to Good Hope and MacPherson. What is to be done? I suffer a great deal at every camping-place. Yesterday we had to climb a little slope to find a good place. I thought I should never reach the top. I had to stop for a good while, three different times, to take breath. Even on level ground I feel almost as much oppressed. And getting into or out of the barge makes me feel as tired as if I had walked 100 miles. To stoop and arrange my blanket at night takes away my breath. What troubles me most is that I may still be counted sufficient for my post, whereas a really active missionary is wanted here, to travel in all directions for God's glory and the salvation of souls."

On his arrival at Fort Norman he wrote again: "The walk up to the fort nearly killed me. The Indians said to each other, 'See how much he loves us, since he comes when so very sick.' I was for ten minutes unable to say one word."

At Fort Norman he brought back some of the Indians of Great Bear Lake, who had gone over to Protestantism, and he encouraged those who had remained faithful. Then he bought a birch-bark canoe from one of the Indians, and in this, with two young Indians, he set out on his journey of 580 miles to Fort MacPherson. The journey, with a delay of one day at Good Hope, lasted from June 18 to June 28, 1861. On his arrival at MacPherson, before he landed from the canoe, a Loucheux woman, whom he had thought a good Catholic, said to him from the bank: "The minister is good to us; he is better than you; he gives us tobacco and

tea. He has taken all your pictures and crosses out of the camps." Indeed, he had told the Indians that the Catholic religion was dead, and that the priest would never come again. And so the priest who had baptized them, and who loved them, and who had come so far to do them good, was obliged to drink the bitter cup of agony in the very place where the Exaltation of the Holy Cross had given him so sweet a sense of spiritual triumph.

The man in charge of the fort at MacPherson refused to lodge the priest, or to let him have any food. Father Grollier had brought a net, and he set it in the river. But he became more and more asthmatic. Two steps made him pant for breath, and the least breeze made him cough. He trusted the net to his two boys, but the poor creatures purposely spread it where there were no fish. They wanted to make the priest give in at once, and return to Good Hope. But Father Grollier remained from June 28 to August 4, 1861, sleeping out in a little tent, and attacked by mosquitoes, and fasting in the immediate neighbourhood of a fort in which there was plenty of food. He suffered also from knowing that the minister, in robust health, and with plenty of money and provisions, and favoured by all the officials, had gone farther on, crossing the Rocky Mountains to Fort Yukon, and that he himself was powerless to do anything for the spiritual interests of the Indians so far away. He had done what he could at Fort MacPherson, but among the "tobacco Christians" of that place a very anti-Catholic spirit was found in later times.

From his lonely and distressful post, Father Grollier, just before leaving Peel River, wrote to various authorities some such appeal as the following:

"Let there be many prayers for these unfortunate people. It is only by doing holy violence to heaven that we can save them to the Faith, as we have saved Forts Simpson, Norman, and Good Hope. St Teresa converted as many pagans by her prayers as St Francis Xavier by his apostolic labours. But we need also to organize a big push. Imagine that Mr. Kirby has travelled 1,000 miles this spring. How much need there is of active efforts on our part! You will say that he has plenty of money, and we have none. The Apostles had none. Our Lord sent them out without any: *Nolite portare peram*. Let us act quickly. Evil influences are very powerful against us everywhere. As for money, look at that holy Bishop of Montreal (Mgr. Bourget), who, without any money, is always building, always starting new works. The money comes into his hands somehow or other:

he trusts in God. I am leaving here with a very sad heart. It is in heart that I have suffered most. Nevertheless, my words here will have preserved some, and in the conscience of others may have left some root of remorse for a time to come."

Shortly after his return to Good Hope, where for two years he had not seen a priest, Father Grollier was comforted by the unexpected arrival of Father Séguin and Brother Kearney on August 28, 1861. "God loves us, God loves us!" was his exclamation of gratitude and joy. Father Séguin thus described the missionary and the mission-house of Fort Good Hope: "Instead of the healthy and chubby man whom I expected to see, I found a broken-down invalid, who was only skin and bone, and was nearly always panting for breath. His hut is 22 by 16 feet. I stepped in; I thought I was going through the floor: the planks give, as if elastic. An asthmatic man certainly needs fresh air: there is no lack of it for Father Grollier. By way of windows, he has some ragged, torn parchment skins, which let in the breeze quite freely. Through the chinks of the roof I can see the stars; and when it rains we can hardly find a dry corner. This is to be our winter residence."

The little house here described was on the Hare-Indian River, a small tributary of the Mackenzie on the right, and running almost in a line with the Arctic Circle. In the summer of 1862, in Father Séguin's absence at Peel River, this mission-house was brought by Father Grollier and Brother Kearney to its present site near the fort.

In the winter of 1861-62, Bishop Grandin visited fort Good Hope, to the great joy of the suffering Father Grollier and the two other Oblates. The Bishop's own sufferings, going and coming, have been described at some length by a talented writer, the late Father Jonquet, in his *Vie de Mgr. Grandin*. The Bishop stayed at Good Hope from October 9, 1861, till January 9, 1862. He suggested to Father Grollier to come to some mission where the food would not be so bad, nor the climate so severe. But the worn-out missionary begged to be allowed to die in his own nest. He said he could always be of use at that mission, teaching the Catechism to his poor Indians, and leaving Father Séguin free to travel. When the time comes to depart, said he, a missionary is not usually troubled with a long illness. He was allowed to carry out his programme, unto which he remained faithful to the last gasp.

He worked, he preached, he catechized. In his last days, not being able to speak, he taught by signs. He said Mass

for the last time on May 24, 1864. On Sunday, May 29, he assisted at a solemn ceremony which he had long desired to see. Father Séguin blessed a high cross erected on the Good Hope headland. Father Grollier, who had pointed out the hymns to be sung (in French and Montagnais), was carried to the door of the house, so that he might have a full view. As he sat there during the function, he wept tears of joy. When the great cross had been erected, Father Grollier said, "O my Jesus, I die happy, since I have seen the sacred standard of thy Cross lifted up at the very ends of the earth."

The next day he entered upon his agony. But he was able to receive the last Sacraments (Holy Communion twice) with perfect consciousness and devotion, and with expressed longing to be where Jesus is, and to see him face to face who is hidden beneath the sacramental veils.

In the beginning of his last illness, he had said that he thought if he had a little milk and some potatoes they would restore him. A few years ago, the late Archbishop Ireland, preaching in the London Oratory on behalf of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, brought forward this example of the privations which the missionaries endure in order to preach the Gospel of God's grace. That Archbishop was himself a true missionary, and, in his own North-West, from his earliest priestly days, was the friend and helper of the apostles of the Canadian North-West, who so often passed through St Paul, when Minnesota was on the high-road from Montreal to Manitoba.

To find milk or a potato for Father Grollier, someone would have had to travel for half a year. But when the end was really near, he no longer thought of any such gratification. Sometimes he was delirious. Sometimes his cough was troublesome. Very often he spoke, but only of the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, and of his being now of no use upon earth, and of his one desire that the good and merciful God would call him to himself. During his thanksgiving after his last Communion, he prayed with ardent piety, looking now upon the picture of St Joseph dying in the arms of Jesus and Mary, and now upon the humble tabernacle, which, from his couch of buffalo hide, he could see through the half-drawn curtain of the little sanctuary. And so he died, with a smile upon his lips, at five o'clock in the morning of June 4, 1864, being only thirty-eight years of age.

Father Séguin wrote the same day: "The Indians and half-breeds came in crowds to see him laid out in soutane,

surplice, and stole, and holding in his hands his Oblate's Cross, which he kissed so often during his sufferings yesterday. I had covered his face, but the veil was taken away. The people could not tire of looking upon that face of their devoted apostle."

Father Grollier lies buried where he himself wished to be. Father Séguin once spoke of burying him where the church would be built at Good Hope. But he said, "No! Bury me among the Indians, between the last two, with my face turned towards the cross."

To Father Grollier succeeded Father Séguin, a missionary among the Indians for forty-one years until his death in 1902. He was the special protector and father of the poor, suffering, degraded Hare-skins of Good Hope. To-day, wherever he is mentioned, whether at home or in the foreign mission-field, he is universally called a Saint. How well filled, how laborious, how successful in the event, and how utterly hidden from the eyes of men, was the life that he spent in the service of the flock under his care! He himself was always very silent about the trials which he had to endure, and about his bodily sufferings, but we have been able to learn some details of his life.

Father Séguin arrived at Fort Good Hope on August 26, 1861, being then twenty-eight years of age. Though he had been accustomed only to his books, he soon became an expert artisan. He put Father Grollier's hut into a state of good repair. He made himself a carpenter, clock-maker, painter, and sculptor. His first mission-work was among the Loucheux. He left for Fort MacPherson, on the Peel River, on Holy Saturday, 1862. He found the Indians there very sorry for their treatment of Father Grollier the previous year. He was still there when Mr. Kirby (the Protestant clergyman, formerly a schoolmaster at Red River) arrived on his way to Fort Yukon. Father Séguin accompanied him, in quite a friendly way, as far as Lapierre House, on the Porcupine River, to the south of the Davidson Mountains, in the north of what is now the Yukon territory. This was a journey of four days through alternate mountains and marshes, and across a dozen rivers, which had to be waded. Several times Mr. Kirby and Father Séguin joined hands in order not to be carried away by the current.

From Lapierre House, which he reached on June 17, 1862, Father Séguin wrote to a novice master: "When I arrived here my head was like a gourd, and my fingers like sausages. If you have any novices longing for mortifica-

tions, send them out here, where hardships are plentiful every day in the year."

Father Séguin founded a little mission, dedicated to St Barnabas, at Lapierre House, but it was afterwards thought more prudent to abandon it. The Indians of all that far-off region of Lapierre House and Fort MacPherson were sufficiently provided for—if they wished to become Catholics—by the mission founded on the Arctic (or Little) Red River, a tributary of the Mackenzie, just south of Point Separation. During Father Séguin's stay at Lapierre House, though many Indians at first attended his instructions, in the end he had a congregation of only fifteen. Mr. Kirby was accused at that time of something not so meritorious as the giving of tea and tobacco. He was reported to have said that Father Grollier was married, that Father Séguin, there present, had several wives, and Bishop Grandin also.

On his return journey from that Farthest North, Father Séguin reached Good Hope on August 3, 1862. On September 3, in obedience to a letter, brought him on the barges, from Mgr. Grandin, he set out for Fort Yukon. He had for travelling companion a new Protestant minister, a Mr. MacDonald, a half-breed, and an unmarried man, who had been sent because the Indians had so often objected to the "English man of a wife." The two companions on the Company's barge arrived at Fort Yukon on September 23, 1862. During that visit, Father Séguin could do no good among the twelve hundred or more Indians of the Fort Yukon region. They were greatly under the influence of a man named Houle, an apostate from the Catholic Faith, who had become the interpreter and assistant of the minister. Houle was supposed to have preached that—to say nothing about tea and tobacco—the Protestant religion was far better than the Catholic: it did not interfere with polygamy or things of that sort. Father Séguin remained all the winter at Fort Yukon, treated with equal contempt by white men and red men. It may be mentioned here that two other fruitless attempts were made to convert the Indians of Fort Yukon—viz., by Father Petitot in the summer of 1870, and by Mgr. Clut and Father Lecorre in the winter of 1872-73. The fort is in Alaska, now an Apostolic Vicariate under the Right Rev. Bishop Crimont, S.J.

On June 3, 1863, Father Séguin left Fort Yukon. He reached Fort Good Hope after thirty-five days of very trying and exhausting voyaging by land and water. All that he would tell about his hardships was that he had hurt his foot so badly that he lost the nail of a great toe. The wound

was a trouble to him all the rest of his life. Of that long journey in 1863, another inheritance, which came to him in the mountain passes, was a rheumatic affection, which he had to carry with him to the grave.

We have already told of the blessing of the great cross at Fort Good Hope in May, 1864. The half-breed, who was helping to erect and plant the cross, somehow allowed its whole weight to rest for a moment on Father Séguin, whose effort to support it caused a most serious rupture, which gave him pain and trouble for the remaining thirty-eight years of his life.

Every year for thirty years, Father Séguin paid a visit to the Loucheux Indians at Fort MacPherson, or the Arctic Red River. There and back, it was a journey of 540 miles in a birch-bark canoe, or a boat. Father Giroux writes on this subject: "I assure you it is not a holiday trip. The missionary, starting when the ice breaks up, comes in for all the rains and the unfavourable winds. And when he has to land, it is on banks covered still with ice blocks, or with deep mud. When he reaches his destination, he spends a fortnight in his cabin, instructing the Loucheux, and listening to all their complaints, from morning till night. The night is spent in filling the hut with smoke to get rid of the mosquitoes—and in losing one's sleep. The smoke, after a little, inflames the eyes so much that one has to give up a remedy which brings on a disease. Then the poor victim has to be content to be eaten alive. The half-hour of Mass is an excruciating torture. To give an idea of the number of mosquitoes in any particular spot, I may mention that in our chapel at the Arctic Red River, in 1889, I saw crushed, on the only casement, a mass of mosquitoes as big as one's fist. Well, of the torments he endured, and of the wretched food given him, I never heard a word from Father Séguin himself. And then consider him coming back to Good Hope from that neighbourhood of the Mackenzie delta. For six or eight days, during at least sixteen hours of the twenty-four, he sat in a little boat, under a burning sun, protected only by a mosquito-veil from the bloodthirsty insects, exposed to heavy showers and fierce storms, never safe from accidents, and perhaps at the mercy of lazy and impudent young Indians."

At Fort Good Hope, where Father Grollier had been specially concerned to make known what Cardinal Newman calls the one authorized form of Christianity, it became Father Séguin's mission to raise the poor Hare-skins out of their heathen state. While Father Petitot—his com-

panion, 1864-78—was anywhere between Great Bear Lake and the Frozen Ocean, and while Father Ducot was planning his Fort Norman campaigns, Father Séguin, by little and by very little, and with marvellous patience and prudence, was laboriously “forming Christ Jesus in his little children,” his Indian flock. What a task! In reply to questions of the Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Faraud, Father Séguin wrote:

“God grant that the day of salvation may yet dawn for our poor people here! At present their lives are such as make one tremble. By my ministry, there has just been ‘born again of water and the Holy Ghost’ an infant whom his mother had thrown upon the dung-heap as soon as born. Fathers of families here eat their own children. An old man has just been with me, who this morning ate the last morsel remaining of his own murdered child. He was coming along to this fort in company of several other Indians. But he dropped behind, set up his tent, killed his son and daughter, and feasted on their flesh while it lasted. When I expressed my horror, and tried to teach him to be horrified, he said to me: ‘Our forefathers have told us that some people saved their own lives by eating their own children. Why should not I save my life in the same way?’”

We may here interrupt Father Séguin in order to acknowledge that famine years were more frequent among the Hare-skis than among other tribes. Their first missionaries found the tradition still fresh of 1840-41, when ninety persons were eaten, several of them killed by their own relations. Two savage women watched on the bank of the Mackenzie for two of the Company’s men, who were to pass carrying the mails. They enticed them to delay, and murdered them during their sleep, in order to feed on their flesh. In reference to that same famine year, Mgr. Taché wrote that some mothers, whose children died of starvation, seized their little bodies, and lifted them above their heads with horrifying shouts, and a hideous despairing laughter more heart-rending than tears, and then roasted them, dismembered them, and shared them with those who were not so near death as to be unable to eat.

Father Séguin’s report to Bishop Faraud continues thus: “These unhappy folk have no idea of the meaning of marriage. The men take a woman when they please, and turn her away when they please. The women are quite proud of the number of their husbands. How are we to teach the religion of Christian love and purity to people with whom such modes of life have had the force of law for many generations?”

The very sufferings of those poor Redskins were, however, a mercy of God in their behalf, and inclined them to listen to the good tidings of the Saviour, and his world to come. There were epidemics at Fort Good Hope, and the prolonged winter night, so far north, always brought hunger. By 1874 the Indians at Good Hope seemed to be sincere, faithful Catholics. Suddenly, a sort of schism arose. A considerable number of the Hare-skins left off hearing Mass, began to work on Sundays, and to blaspheme. For a while Father Séguin was utterly at a loss to understand what had happened. At last a squaw explained. She said: "I thought you knew that, when the barges came from La Loche Portage, our men told us that they had seen a man who had risen from the dead. This man, who died a year ago, had spent the winter with God Almighty, the Great Spirit, who sent him back to earth to complain of the priests, who were giving God too much to do. Owing to the priests, God had no time either to smoke or to sleep, and he wished it to be made known that it was very wrong not to work on Sunday, and that when the priests said Mass, heaven became dark, and God Almighty was displeased."

Fortunately, the vogue of this new revelation was not for long. It seems to have been the expiring effort of folly and superstition. At a later date, when Father Ducot arrived at Fort Good Hope, he found "all the Indians hearing Mass every day, and praying like members of a religious community." In 1894, Father Séguin himself wrote on February 7: "We have had a very hard winter. The centigrade thermometer marked, during an unbroken week, 50 degrees below zero, and for two days 56 degrees. In spite of this cold, the Indians of the fort and of the neighbouring camps continued to come every morning to Mass, and every evening to the devotions in honour of the holy Childhood." Father Séguin's flock were, therefore, at last truly religious, but it may now be regretted that he, like many another holy priest, was too strict about admitting people to Holy Communion.

As years passed on, long nights, reading by the light of a tallow candle or the fire, and the dazzling sunlight upon the snow in spring, finished the work begun by smoking out the mosquitoes, and Father Séguin became nearly blind. In 1901, by desire of his Superiors, he set out for France. His Hare-skin flock "brought him on his way to the ship," as the elders of Ephesus brought St Paul, and they were sorrowing most of all lest "they should see his face no more." But he promised them that after an operation he would come

back, and would leave his bones amongst them, like Father Grollier.

In France his eyesight was not restored, either by the skill of doctors or by his pilgrimages to Paray-le-Monial and Lourdes. His work was done, to which he had gone forth with such constant fidelity all the day long. Now the shades had lengthened, and the evening was come, and there remained for him "a holy rest and peace at the last." He went to stay with his sister, a benefactress of his missions, at Ennezat, near Clermont. He thought himself an exile, since his heart was at Fort Good Hope. He preached no longer, but he edified priests and people, because he prayed so much, and he suffered so willingly. On one occasion, in answer to sisterly remonstrance, he said: "It is because the feather bed does not agree with me. If I had a few pieces of wood, and my northern snows, I'd be all right." He said Mass every day (always the same, by a special Indult), until November 3, 1902. His preparation and his thanksgiving were always very long. Sometimes he was found in prayer at three o'clock, in preparation for his Mass at six. One morning, when his thanksgiving had lasted over an hour, his sister called him to breakfast. But he said, "Leave me still with my beloved blessed Lord." On December 11, 1902, his year's exile in his native place came to an end, and he must have passed beyond Good Hope into the home of never-failing charity, for the neighbours, when they heard his passing-bell, said, "The saint is dead."

At Fort Good Hope Father Séguin's work was continued very efficiently by Father Houssais, who had been his companion from 1895. He was much helped in his cure of souls by the mourning of the Indians for the venerated Blackrobe, whose face they never did see any more, and for whose eternal repose they offered many prayers and Requiem Masses. Father Houssais, in his turn, in the years 1907-12, trained two other missionaries, whose names must be very prominent in a later chapter. Father Giroux and Father Robin were in charge of the model Mission of our Lady of Good Hope in the years 1916-19. Father Robin now serves the mission alone. At Fort Good Hope, on October 1, 1918, was laid to rest, beside Father Grollier, another of God's "hidden saints," Brother Kearney, who must surely receive in due course more than this passing mention. He had been at Good Hope from the year 1861.

The Canadian Government (Department of Marine and Fisheries) has established a meteorological station at the Good Hope Mission. The Oblate Fathers keep watch on

barometer, thermometer, and anemometer. They also make regular reports on thunderstorms, shooting stars, halos, the aurora borealis, etc. From Good Hope it is quite easy, at least sometimes, to see the aurora starting from the magnetic Pole, and thence spreading all over the heaven. The magnetism of the Pole is such that the blade of a knife (for instance) left in a line with the Pole for half a day becomes highly magnetized. As for the "needle," it seems to jump off the dial of the compass rather than to turn on its pivot.

Of late years, the missionary Fathers (on behalf of the Meteorological Office) have been sending up balloons, whose height and movements they record by means of a theodolite (surveying instrument). Similar observations are taken by various persons in many posts from Hudson Bay to Alaska. At Good Hope it has been remarked that however the wind may be blowing on land, the balloon is always carried to the east. It moves thither by the south in summer, and by the north in winter.

Ever since 1900 the Grey Nuns at Fort Smith and Fort Resolution send also meteorological reports to the Government.

CHAPTER XXII

THE MACKENZIE DELTA: THE LOUCHEUX

THE *coureurs des bois* in the old days must have met a considerable number of members of this tribe with a noticeable squint, since they fixed this name upon them. The Loucheux are the most northerly of all the Déné tribes. As they appear even now, their broad shoulders, bull neck, beetling brow, and fearless gaze, plainly tell us what formidable enemies they must have been in the days of their pride and absolute liberty, when they were very numerous. The Eskimos still keep memory of the terrible vengeance which often followed their own murderous attacks upon the Loucheux. Only a few months before the arrival among them of the first missionary, Father Grollier, the Eskimos had murdered the women and children, and burned the village, while the Loucheux hunters were absent from the camp. Those hunters next went in pursuit of the murderers. They found a batch of them at Point Separation, massacred them every one, disembowelled them, and spread the bodies along the bank, under a sign-post carrying these words, "So shall be treated every Eskimo who comes here." These two races, then, were still at war with each other, when Father Grollier reconciled them in the name of Jesus Christ. That reconciliation had permanent effects.

The habitat of the Loucheux is at both sides of the Rockies. Most of them are in the modern Yukon territory. Others are in the Mackenzie delta. We have already mentioned the disappointments and failures of the missionaries on the Yukon River in 1862, 1870, and 1872. We have now to speak about the Loucheux of the Lower Mackenzie. The forts to which they bring in their furs are at MacPherson, and the (Little or) Arctic Red River. Fort MacPherson, 280 miles by water, and Red River 220 miles, from Fort Good Hope, are far within the polar region, with its winter night that knows no midday, and its summer day that knows no midnight. The fierce north winds sweep down there in all their force, for there is not one mountain or forest between those forts and the Frozen Ocean. At first, MacPherson was the only fort for trading with the Loucheux. It is on

the left bank of the Peel (called also Plumée) River, thirty miles from Point Separation, which is at the head of the Mackenzie delta, where the Peel and the Arctic Red River join forces with the Mackenzie. At high tides, the rivers here may be driven back towards the Rocky Mountains. They are generally well supplied with fish, and therefore their banks are favoured by the Indians.

A Breton authority has called the Loucheux the Bretons of the Far North. They are good-natured, gay, and obstinate. They have also a strong natural leaning towards religion, such as would have pleased Pasteur himself, who admired so much the faith of the Breton peasant, and even of the peasant's wife. The Loucheux were wonderfully quick in getting rid of all their superstitions. Their attachment to the Catholic Faith is both intelligent and emotional, and it is now most deeply rooted. Mgr. Grouard met the Loucheux for the first time in 1890, and he declared that he had not met elsewhere so much faith and enthusiastic piety. "Quels braves gens !" he said.

During the famine of 1888-89, two Loucheux families dragged themselves as far as Fort Good Hope. They had been without food for weeks. The priest said to them: "Alas ! poor children, why have you come here ? You know we have no means of helping you. We have nothing." A man who was still able to speak replied: "We know that, but we have come to hear Mass, and then we shall die content."

In the time of another famine, a certain Loucheux camp had to choose between death and apostasy. The traders said to them, "We will give you food and clothes, and powder and shot, but you must become Protestants." "Keep them," was the reply; "if we must die of hunger, we shall die Catholics." Yet they had no resident priest near them at that date.

At the present day the Loucheux Mission may justly be called a "model parish." The people truly love the Gospel of Christ, and its priests. But it was no small labour to bring about so happy a result. The Loucheux is the hardest to learn of all the Déné dialects. The home of the tribe is in the region of the most extreme cold. And great were the difficulties to be overcome in saving for the Church so large a number at all events of the Déné tribesmen. Father Grollier at Fort MacPherson, in 1860, thought it quite prudent to baptize sixty-five Loucheux and four Eskimos. It is not likely that they were all children. But in June, 1861, as has been mentioned already, he found a state of things

which grieved him very much, after his very trying and painful expedition to the same place.

After him, Father Séguin devoted himself to the Loucheux by visiting them every year from 1862 to 1890. He covered the 530 miles (of the journey there and back) in a small canoe or on foot. In 1868, in his seventh visit, his position was made so difficult by the Protestant influence, and the Loucheux wife, of the man in charge of the fort, that he set up another little chapel on the Arctic Red River. However, he continued his visits to Peel River (Fort MacPherson) until 1873, when the Loucheux themselves told him that there was no use in his coming there any longer, as the new minister had married a smart young woman of their own tribe, who had great influence over them all. From that time Father Séguin visited only the Arctic Red River camp.

At long last, Mgr. Faraud succeeded in sending a resident missionary among the Loucheux. This was Father Giroux, Constant by name and constant by nature—and by grace. He arrived at Good Hope in July, 1888, got into touch with the Loucheux in the spring of 1889, and, after learning their language, reached Fort MacPherson, to take up his residence there, on April 28, 1890. He set to work at once on the mission site. With the help of one Indian he made the planks needed for a house of 19 by 16 feet. When the ice broke up, he collected a great number of tree-trunks. On June 21, 1890, Mgr. Grouard and Father Lefebvre, calling at MacPherson on their way to visit the Eskimos, found that Father Giroux had laid the foundations of his new house. On two other occasions, Father Lefebvre called at Fort MacPherson, on his way to visit the Eskimos. In 1892 he remained at MacPherson, along with Father Giroux. To these two Canadian priests belongs the honour of having been the first to carry the Gospel to the very highest and last northern latitudes. For six long years they struggled against cold, and hunger, and poverty, and isolation, and sectarian aggression, and European corruption added to the native vices. As regards the first hardship mentioned, the intense cold, let it be remembered, for instance, that in a recent December and January the centigrade thermometer stood persistently between the fortieth and the fifty-third degree of frost. Indeed, any farther north than Fort Good Hope (which is south of the Arctic Circle) it is never possible to grow even a cabbage. The soil is frozen to so great a depth that it is never thawed. The summer sun is often very hot, but the summer lasts too short a time to do anything more than bring to life the plague of mosquitoes.

Fathers Giroux and Lefebvre remained at their mission-house (which Father Grollier had called of the Holy Name of Mary) at Fort MacPherson until 1896, always hoping against hope for the conversion of the Indians. However, their difficulties increased so much that they had to leave. In fact, the Protestant Loucheux went so far as to set fire to the mission-house. To take everything away safely was no easy matter. And to have to go at all was a very hard task, but it was faced. They had built their humble hut and chapel by long labour and pain. For months, with hatchet and hammer and saw, they had worked to set up a windmill, to keep a large saw in action. The windmill was a failure. Then they tried to use water power. In four months of hard work they built a mill-dam. On a sudden a flood rose in the Peel River, and swept the sluice-gates away. A few minutes earlier, or later, Father Giroux himself would have been standing near, and would have followed the wreck into the Arctic Ocean. The two missionaries next began to do all the sawing by their own manual labour. In spite of all disappointments and hardships, the planks for the making of a new chapel were ready, when it was decided to retire to the Arctic Red River post, to which the better-disposed Loucheux would be sure to follow the priests.

To make known that they were going, and taking what belonged to them, might have caused difficulties with the local officials of the Company. To get help in their work would have made their purpose known. Whatever was worth bringing away was, therefore, hauled or carried by the two Oblate Fathers themselves, in thirty or forty winter journeys, over a distance of forty-five miles. On April 7, 1896, they openly took their leave of Fort MacPherson. In their fixed post by the side of the Arctic Red River, the two pioneer missionaries gave themselves up very devotedly to spiritual and temporal work. Sunday, indeed, was their day of rest from servile labour, but on all other days they went off early into such scanty forests as their latitude provides, hewed down some trees, and drew them by their own strength. These they fashioned into shape for building purposes, and they returned home in the evening to take dinner and supper at the same moment. Their food was a few little Arctic hares, and a sort of bread made of the roe of fishes. Of the taste of flour they knew nothing, except on two occasions, in that year (1896).

Before the end of the year, the chapel was nearly finished, and it was solemnly inaugurated with midnight Mass at

Christmas, 1896. The Loucheux thought it such a glorious temple of the living God, that they declared there could be "nothing grander in the great house of him who made the world."

The ordinary laborious missionary life followed this Christmas. In 1897, all the world heard of the "rush" in search of gold on the Klondike River. Father Lefebvre was one of the priests who followed the miners there. By desire of Mgr. Grouard, the Vicar Apostolic, he crossed the valleys and the mountain ranges to Dawson, taking leave of Father Giroux on April 21, 1898. He remained in the Klondike region until 1907, and since that date he has been travelling and questing, in order to provide and distribute the various essential supplies for the Far North.

Father Giroux remained at his post at Arctic Red River, where he had the company of Brother Louis Beaudet until 1902, but was left alone 1902-4. In 1905 he installed Father Lécuyer in his place, and was himself appointed to the charge of the mission at Fort Providence. There he remained until 1915, when he was transferred to Fort Good Hope. In 1919, after thirty laborious years in the Mackenzie Missions, he had to retire as an invalid to his native province of Quebec.

The mission at Arctic Red River keeps the name—Holy Name of Mary—given to its predecessor on the Peel River. The missionary in charge since 1905 is Father Lécuyer. Those who saw this young priest, so pale, and supposed to have only one lung, when he was leaving the scholasticate in Belgium for a foreign mission so far away, would be astonished to see in 1920 or 1921 the good effects of hard work and Arctic winds. They do not hinder good health or good humour.

From the Loucheux mission, several visits were paid to the Eskimos. Father Lefebvre in his day visited at least twice the Eskimos of Richards Island, at the eastern mouth of the Mackenzie, and three times the Eskimos of Herschel Island, at four days' sail, over the ocean, from the Mackenzie. His first visit to Richards Island brought him a rather terrible experience. The Eskimos had promised to take him back to Fort MacPherson, but when the time came not one of them would agree to start. He himself went up the Mackenzie delta for thirty miles, hoping to find a Loucheux camp of fishermen. Instead of these friendly Indians he found only a few Eskimo families. One man agreed on August 19 to row the missionary home for a very large reward. On August 24 he consented to start. In

two days' rowing he made only twenty-five miles. Then, having the priest at his mercy, he declared in a threatening way that he would go no farther for the reward promised. Father Lefebvre was obliged to take on his back what remained of his provisions, and to begin on foot a journey of 160 miles along the Mackenzie, at a season when there could be no hope of human help. He made his way through the Delta and its thick willow-branches. Then, leaving the banks, he mounted high and steep cliffs, and got down into broad and deep ravines, where he was in water up to the knees. When evening came, he was dead tired: his pack felt three times as heavy as it really was. But Providence was watching over the missionary. Next day he had been walking only half an hour when, to his amazement and joy, he saw two Loucheux tents beyond the bushes. In a few minutes he was there, but the dogs had called out the folk before himself. These good Indians were so delighted to see the priest that they said *Merci, Merci, Merci* over and over again. It is the word the Indians now use to express their gratification.

Father Giroux also, who once went to Herschel Island, had varied experiences in his career as the Loucheux missionary. On his snow-shoes, or in his canoe, he crossed and recrossed in all directions a round-about region of 230 miles, for the consolation and the spiritual assistance of his faithful flock. How usually he came back heart-broken by the sights and sounds of suffering brought before him! His only consolation was—but a very great one—that his Indians were passing away as true Christians, in sublime resignation. He wrote in 1889: "We heard of a hunter who was starving at Lake Auray, in the neighbourhood of Good Hope. Unfortunately, we could not have done anything for him. The mission had come to its very last rationed resources. The poor man died in April. His wife came with her children to settle down beside a trail, where she hoped some sledge might pass. Her two boys died first. We found where the mother had lovingly buried them in the snow outside her tent. The two elder girls died next. But the mother had no longer strength enough to bury them. There remained a little daughter, only a few months old. The mother gave her the breast, but there was not a drop of nourishment there. Yet this infant was the last to die, for it was plain that she had tried to get free from her dead mother's arms."

There was another death in Father Giroux's time which, though regretted as a public loss, was touching and consoling. This was the passing away of the aged Catholic

chieftainness of the Loucheux, Cécile (or Cecilia). Cécile had been taught and influenced by a Catholic lady, Mme. Gaudet, the wife of the chief trader, for half a century, of the Hudson Bay Company at Fort Good Hope. M. and Mme. Gaudet, and their children after them, were special benefactors of the missionaries of the North-West. Cécile was known to Mme. Gaudet as early at least as 1860. What she learned of the white man's religion made her desire the coming of the Blackrobe. She was baptized by Father Grollier. She was the acknowledged chieftainness of the Mackenzie Loucheux, meaning those of the Arctic Red River and Mackenzie, as distinct from those of Peel River (Fort MacPherson). Mme. Gaudet called her the Mother of the Loucheux, having in view her efforts to bring her people out of heathenism into the Christian Faith, but she was literally the mother or grandmother of many of them. She was a woman of powerful build, with pride in her port, and defiance in her eye, very eloquent in speech, by her fearless repetition and sarcasm, and always ready to drive home her points by fist or stick, more forcible than any drum ecclesiastic. She taught Father Séguin the Loucheux language, and at the same time she translated for the assembled people the addresses which he delivered in the Hare-skin dialect. She learned by heart the Catechism which the missionary wrote for her, and then she preached *ex abundantia cordis*, when the priest was voyaging far away. Cécile solved all cases of conscience with ease. When it was reported in the tribe "Cécile says so," there was no more room for debate: it was the same as *Roma locuta est*. When she was very old, she heard that one of her grandsons, a fine big man, in charge of the Company's fort at MacPherson, seemed inclined to turn Protestant. Very soon she paid him a visit. "One of my children to give up the Catholic Faith!" she said. "I tell you this: as long as I am able to lift a stick no Loucheux will ever become an apostate." Suiting the action to the word, she brought down her stick three times—as if in honour of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—upon the head of the head of the fort. He saw at once the point of the argument, begged grandmother's pardon, and promised to be a good boy.

Cécile lived so long that nobody knew how old she was. In the end she was blind, and almost paralyzed. She had been for ten years living on charity, when hunger drove the Loucheux away into the woods—all except Cécile and her sister. This sister, Marguerite, was blind also. But

she was able to walk, and by feeling her way could bring home wood to keep the fire burning. After a while Marguerite died, and Cécile was quite alone. Father Giroux often brought her holy Communion, and he helped her as far as he possibly could. One morning in September, 1892, she was found dead in her wigwam. Her stiffened corpse was in such rags as would have contented even St Benedict Labre. In one hand she held her beads, quite worn by long use. In the frozen half-smile upon her face was some expression of that kindness to others, love of God, and calm resignation, which had always distinguished this centenarian. By her side was a flannel shirt. It had once belonged to Bishop Clut. In one of his visits he had given it to the old chieftainess, out of pity for her utter destitution. It had been thrown off in the end as too verminous to be any longer bearable.

So died, says Father Giroux, this Christian woman, truly virtuous and pious, who had done and suffered much for love of the Catholic religion. With this picture of one so poor in all the things of this world, but rich in faith, we close our chapter on the Loucheux. Her fate in her old age enables us to realize what a blessed work of charity for the aged and abandoned has been undertaken, with such marvellous abnegation, by "The Grey Nuns in the Far North."

Those Mackenzie Loucheux were once numerous. Famine, influenza, typhus, and new diseases brought in by the whites, have thinned their ranks. They are now only 150. But, if they are passing away, they are so passing through these temporal things as not to lose the eternal. We may well trust that they are passing from poverty-stricken huts into Jerusalem the Golden, from snow-clad purgatorial plains into the halls of heaven, where God's favoured children "for ever and for ever are clad in robes of white, and the pastures of the blessed are decked in glorious sheen."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CHILDREN OF THE WOODS: THE CREE INDIANS

IN this volume, sketching the lives and labours, the successes and failures, the consolations and sufferings, of the missionaries of the Far North, much more is omitted than is told, even of the missionary posts in the one Vicariate of the Mackenzie. In that immense region is found, even still in considerable force, in its various tribes, the great Déné nation of Indians. With the religious fortunes of the Dénés we have been concerned so far. And we wish also to give a chapter in conclusion to the Eskimo race, living still farther north, living indeed at the literal end of the earth, in the frozen ocean round the uttermost pole. Yet, in order not to remain too much in the Farthest North, and in order to give a more nearly correct view of the North-West missions, it seems desirable to devote a chapter to an Indian tribe which took possession of the woods, after leaving those prairies which even yet, in truth, though the railway now crosses them, are *Les Pays d'en Haut*, the Upper Country, and to a great extent the Great Lone Land, and Wild North Land of Sir William Butler.

In those prairie provinces of the Canadian Dominion we find a very important Indian tribe, named of old by the French explorers Les Cris, and now in English called the Crees. The hunting grounds of great numbers of them were the regions of the Athabaska River and the Peace River. We have already seen these Crees mixed with Montagnais at Lake Athabaska, and with Beavers on the Peace River.

When the Athabaska-Mackenzie Vicariate was formed in 1862, the Crees were the sole masters of the country between Fort MacMurray and Lake La Biche (both in what is now Alberta), and between the Athabaska River and British Columbia. In that same country, there were just a few Iroquois (in the employment of the Hudson Bay Company), and a small number of Assiniboine immigrants. Lesser Slave Lake might be considered the centre of the region of the Athabaska Crees. The lake is called Lesser (or Little) by comparison, but it is about eighty miles

long by ten broad. Placed midway between the Peace and Athabaska Rivers, between the 55th and 56th degrees of latitude, it sends its tribute to the Athabaska by the Lesser Slave River.

St Bernard's Mission on Lesser Slave Lake is the central mission of the present Athabaska Vicariate. It was founded in 1871, and from that Cree Mission, or from the Dunvegan Mission (founded at an earlier date), the Oblate Fathers established several missionary posts, which are served by resident priests. St Bernard's itself may be called the father of the new town of Grouard. There are two other missions on Lesser Slave Lake, and at various distances are the separate missions of Sturgeon Lake, Wabaska Lake, Spirit (or Ghost) River, Grande Prairie, etc. Many were the great pioneer planters of the Faith in those primeval regions. Very easy would it be to make up a catalogue of dozens of names, every one of them worthy of special mention. To name Father Lacombe is enough. His work was specially among the Crees. Father Desmarais, for many years of extreme poverty at (now) Grouard, taught school there, so that the children of Catholic Indians, half-breeds, and whites might be educated without having to frequent the well-equipped Protestant school. Then there is Father Constant Falher, whose name has been given to a rising town. He is an indefatigable voyager, and he thinks so much of his melodious Cree language that he calls it the Italian of North America. It appears that Cree is rich in constructions, and in shades of meaning though poor in letters, of which it has only fifteen. At least nine of our consonants are unpronounceable by the lips of a Cree Indian. There are at least thirty Oblate missions among the Crees, and it is only of the Crees we now speak, not of the Blackfeet, Sauteux, Sioux, Piegan, and Blood Indians, of the same countries.

There is a great difference of character between the Dénés and the Crees. The Cree is of a passionate nature, which easily hurries him to extremes, whether of anger or of gentleness; and from satanic magic to the fervent worship of God. He is less simple than the Montagnais, less fickle, and less easy to convince. But, when once convinced, he is very firm in adhering to a reasonable and religious line of conduct.

The Cree bears his character on his face. It is a truly typical Indian face, very spare, very sharp, telling in every line of a proud, contemptuous, stoical disposition. Dressed in old Indian style, with its high feathers, the Indian Cree head has a certain grandeur of its own.



TAKING BREATH IN THE FOREST

If the Déné is timid, and always ready to run away from that traditional "enemy" who is never to be seen, the Cree, on the contrary, is bold, overbearing, quarrelsome, and not unusually "spoiling for a fight." In the Indian schools, in which there are both Cree and Montagnais children, no greater penance can be inflicted on a little Cree boy than to put him next a Montagnais little girl; nothing more humiliating can be said to a little Cree girl than to tell her she will have to marry a Montagnais. The high spirit and the well-established power of the Cree nation is plainly seen by the immense extent of their possessions in the American North-West.

But the Crees were more than brave. They were very cruel. Their wars were not yet ended when our first missionaries reached them. The description by Father Lacombe of his coming in the midnight between the Cree and the Blackfeet murderous braves, will remain for ever a *locus classicus*. In romance, and also in true story, people will always read eagerly of scalp, and tomahawk, and war-whoop, or Indians' yell. But readers will not always realize what terrible barbarities accompanied the march of Indians upon the warpath. Mgr. Laffèche, of whom we have spoken in previous chapters, has left on record an account of the conduct of Cree women which makes us shudder to think what the men must have been. Some Blackfeet horse-thieves (says the Bishop) were surprised near a Cree camp, and one was wounded. But in the dark he escaped into the wood. The Crees surrounded the place, and watched all night. When daylight came, they searched most carefully in all directions, without finding the Blackfoot. They then joined the camp, concluding that he must have got away after all. But two Cree women determined to go through the brushwood again. Even they were about to give up the search, having peered into every hole and corner, when they noticed what might be two feet appearing from under a fallen tree, which they had examined several times already. They quickly discovered that their suspicion was well founded, and they dragged out the unfortunate wounded Blackfoot from a hole under where the tree's roots had been. Then they began their diabolical diversion. To have the longer enjoyment of their victim's pains, they began by tearing his flesh with bodkins, and they laughed long and loud over his contortions. Next they proceeded to scalp him. When he tried to save himself from this extreme of outrage (according to Indian ideas), by putting his hands upon his head, the

women slashed his hands with knives, and in a moment the lifted hair and skin had left his skull quite naked. Only when they had completely butchered him by a still more terrible operation did they march proudly into camp, wearing the memorials of their victory.

The devoted missionary and Bishop, Mgr. Laflèche, relating this event, gave it to be understood what a work missionaries like himself had undertaken in the North-West, and out of what sort of raw material they were trying to make a Christian people.

Mgr. Clut, for many years coadjutor of the Vicar Apostolic of Athabaska, wrote at Lesser Slave Lake, when invalided in 1889, a description of the Indian treatment of persons called windigos, which is very instructive. A windigo is an Indian who has eaten, or who (perhaps a poor lunatic) says he wants to eat, human flesh. At Sturgeon Lake (Bishop Clut tells us), among the Indians uninfluenced by religion, there were some supposed windigos. A sudden fear of them seized upon the other Indians, and they executed one windigo. The important point in such a case was to make the cannibal vomit up the ice which he was supposed to have in his inside. One man with two strokes of a tomahawk opened the windigo's skull; another cut his throat. Then they clove open his breast and poured in boiling water to melt the ice. In order to hinder the dead man from coming to life, and eating them, they fastened him down in the earth with great wooden pegs, through his hands and body. Mgr. Clut knew also of a woman in the neighbourhood of Lesser Slave Lake, who thought herself a windigo. She begged her husband and children to kill her, as otherwise she would have to eat them. "Strike here," she said to her husband, baring her breast. He and one of the sons struck her dead with their knives.

Many other superstitions prevailed among the Crees, including their sun-dances, and occasional human sacrifices. Even now superstitious traditions have a hold upon them. When Christian Crees become indifferent to religion, or lukewarm, they easily return to the practices of the medicine-man. They do not shed blood nowadays, but they make much of their painted or carved fetishes and amulets of all sorts.

There was a considerable difference, in the old times, between the Wood Crees and the Prairie Crees. Those of the prairies were the lords of the buffalo, and mighty hunters. In the *Blackrobe Voyageur* we may read something of their great hunting expeditions, in which Father

Lacombe often followed them. The results of these battues were abundant good cheer and prolonged festivities. Just as more enlightened people before them, so also the Crees "sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." And their playing was usually so very sinful that some of the earliest missionaries feared that those Indians would never be converted until all the buffaloes were killed. Thank God, their fear was not well founded: it was contradicted by the fact.

Nevertheless, the harder life of the Wood Crees (such as those of the Athabaska region), wandering in small groups through their forests, rendered them less disinclined to hearken to religious truths. These "*Cris des bois*," although not free from faults and relapses, became almost as faithful Catholics as their neighbours, the Montagnais.

One good quality common to both divisions of the Crees, and showing a certain natural nobleness in their nation, was their respect for women and children. No doubt it was this elementary traditional feeling which inspired the answer of a Cree at Fort Vermilion to a certain Protestant Bishop who said that the Bible teaches us only to love and pray to Jesus Christ. "Had you a mother?" the Indian asked. "Of course, like all other men," was the reply. "Well," said the Cree, "I hope you loved her, as I love mine. And you want to tell me that Jesus did not love his Mother, and that he is displeased if I pay her respect. In our religion, we do not separate the Mother and the Son."

When the poor Crees had the Gospel preached to them, they too, like the Dénés, though more slowly, became good Christians. Of course, there has been among them frequent cause for the discouragement of their missionaries. Indian apathy, indifference, living from hand to mouth, having no thought of what is to come—even on the morrow—are proverbial. Nevertheless, there were many Cree tribes, especially in the woods, which were the equals of the Montagnais, Dog-ribs, or Loucheux in the spirit of prayer and in virtue. Even the least fervent among them might have such an intelligent and firm grasp of the Catholic Faith as could hardly be found among the Dénés. When the Canadian Government in 1899 was negotiating a treaty with the Indians of the Athabaska and Peace Rivers, in order to make room for immigrants, one of the promises made by the Government was to build schools, and to pay school-masters. There was an assembly at Lesser Slave Lake, where some Indian leaders, along with priests and Protestant clergymen, met the Government Commission.

When the school question was mentioned, one of the Indians rose to inquire what sort of school-masters were meant. "Are they to be pleasing to the Government, or pleasing to us?" The Chairman, Mr. Laird, at once assured the assembly that the Government intended to respect liberty of conscience absolutely, and that the teachers would be of the same religion as the pupils. Thereupon, the questioner clapped his hands very vigorously, and pointing to Father Falher, O.M.I., said, "Now, Father, you are our school-master." The other Indians imitated their leader, both by applause and by words. Father Falher, who had not foreseen the discussion of this important point, was equally surprised and delighted to find the mere "children of the woods" taking such an intelligent interest in a question of mere schooling. The local Protestant clergyman was in favour of some other arrangement, probably of what was called in Ireland "united secular, and separate religious, education." He paid a visit to the Indian camp that same evening. But his views were not at all acceptable to the Crees.

In the making of that same treaty of 1899 the missionary Bishop, Mgr. Grouard, must have helped both the contracting parties. He tells a story about a case of conscience which he solved—a case raising questions about the meaning of property in land. At Little Red River, a tributary of the Peace near Fort Vermilion, the local chief, a recent convert in his first fervour, consulted the Bishop, saying the Government wanted them to give up their country, and to take money for it. "This country is not mine," said the chief. "I never made it. It was made by the Maker of heaven and earth. How can I honestly take money for what does not belong to me?" The Bishop explained the matter in this way: "The whites want to come into your country, to dig and to plant, and so forth. Their coming will be sure to lessen the number of elks, bears, caribous, beavers, and the rest, in the hunting-grounds. Therefore the money is compensation to you Crees for the loss which must come upon you. You are perfectly justified in taking it." The chief was content, and signed the treaty. Good Bishop Grouard, of Grouard, to whom we owe this anecdote, acknowledges that the Montagnais Indians had no such scruple as the Cree chief. At Lake Athabaska, the treaty was signed with both hands, and both were stretched out to receive, and are always ready to be stretched out again. Most probably the Bishop has never had time to read about Oliver Twist. But his Montagnais, "*braves gens et bons*

chrétiens," he says, seem to be only a mature counterpart of the poor boy who alarmed the world by asking for more. At all events, the Montagnais were so grateful for the Bishop's part in settling the treaty, that they burnt a great deal of powder in his honour, making the rocks resound for a long time in the neighbourhood of the Nativity Mission, Fort Chipewyan, Lake Athabaska.

But we are acknowledging the good qualities of the Crees. It was they who gave Father Lacombe his Indian name, "The Man of the Good Heart," and the choice of that special phrase by way of high compliment tells in their own favour, and is evidence that they are themselves warm-hearted. When they have become well acquainted with their devoted Blackrobes, they never forget them. Long after the death of Father Collignon, who died rather young, an aged Indian of Lesser Slave Lake, named Wabamun, said: "When I am alone in the woods, the tears often come into my eyes when I remember that the fair-haired Father [the Cree name of Father Collignon] is no longer with us. He was very kind. He loved us much."

When the Cree learns the Christian religion he gives his heart very generously to him who so loved the world as to give us his only Son. When Father Bonnald, one of the veterans still manning posts of difficulty and danger in the mission field, was instructing a Cree woman and her two sons in his little chapel near the shores of Hudson Bay, she began to weep, saying, "If I had only known long ago, I should never have been such a wretched sinner."

Bishop Charlebois, Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin, tells us how the missionary can watch the growth of God's grace in his penitents. Very often the newly converted Cree has nothing to confess. "Since I knew the Prayer [*i.e.*, religion] I have not offended God," is what they say, and perhaps after ten or fifteen years in the church. At Canoe Lake, in the neighbourhood of Ile à la Crosse, to the south of the Methy or La Loche Portage, in what is now the Province of Saskatchewan, there is a Cree settlement living like a religious community, so exact are all its members in prayer, Mass, and daily Communion, and in attention to all the calls of the chapel bell, and all the exhortations of the Blackrobe Chief of Prayer whose home is in their midst.

Even the missionaries of the Montagnais give special praise to the Cree Christians. Mgr. Breynat, on his way from the Far North, to Edmonton, when passing in his sledge a Cree camp, near Fort MacMurray, was called to see the dying daughter of Chief Chrysostom. She was suffering,

but smiling. Surprised and moved to see such happiness in one leaving life so young, the Bishop questioned her about wishing to recover, and to remain with her parents, who loved her so much. But she said she was well pleased to die, and it was not easy to live well.

Mgr. Clut tells of a young hunter, whom he visited some months after he had lost his eyesight by a painful accident. As the kind-hearted Bishop was consoling him, he assured the Great Prayer Chief that he desired nothing better than his present blindness. Without knowing anything of Milton, he yet considered that "in this dark world and wide," his soul was now more bent to serve his Maker. He said to the Bishop, "If I still had my eyesight, I might continue to offend God, whereas now he is always in my thoughts. As I cannot find my way in the woods, or go to hunt, I have to keep my heart united with Jesus Crucified."

It was in the same spirit that another member of the same tribe, when crippled and invalided, said that he was glad to be able to suffer for his own sins, and for those of his deceased relations.

A touching incident, related by Father Bonnald, may close this tribute of ours to an Indian race which has been very faithful to religion, though not always helped by the examples of the Palefaces. In the winter of 1887-8 an epidemic of measles swept away great numbers of victims in the Saskatchewan tribes. Young Father Charlebois (now Bishop) arrived at Le Pas, in what is now Northern Manitoba, where he was met by Father Bonnald, whom he was to assist at Pelican Lake. On account, however, of the epidemic that was raging, one went to Pelican Lake, and the other to Cumberland Lake (both in the modern Saskatchewan), so that each might be able to cover a great portion of the wide region affected. As Father Bonnald, on his way to Pelican Lake, passed through Pakitawagan, he found eleven corpses. On four of them were letters for him—voices from the grave. They were written on birch-bark, folded, and sewn up with thread. On the outside were the words, "For the Blackrobe Father only." Father Bonnald read the letters through his tears. They were the confessions of simple souls of sublime faith, dying far away from the priest. They had prayed with fervour; they had recited the rosary, in front of the picture of the Blessed Virgin, fastened to the central pole of their wigwam; and, having no hope of actual confession, they had written down what they would have desired to tell the priest of God with humble and contrite hearts.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE POLAR ICE: THE ESKIMOS

STILL nearer to the North Pole than even the Déné tribes, missionaries as well as explorers have visited a race which they have called Esquimaux or Eskimos. These occupy the land, or rather, to speak more correctly, the ice, which is literally the Farthest North, and is the most desolate portion of the globe. The Eskimos roam the shores of the Arctic Ocean from Behring Strait, west of Alaska, to the Strait of Belle Isle, south-east of Labrador. Across the frozen ocean, they have also spread from the continent into Greenland, and into Franklin Peninsula, Baffin Land, and other divisions of the Arctic Archipelago. The Eskimos may be 10,000 or 15,000 in number.

They are evidently a nation. Their one language, their common traditions, legends, manners, and customs, are sufficient evidence of a common origin. The same evidence enables us to trace that origin, and to discover whence the Eskimos first came to their present habitat. There is still a group of these same people in Kamtchatka. For some reason they failed to cross the ice, or the natural bridge of the Aleutian Islands, into what we call the New World.

The Eskimo face is plainly Asiatic. The whites who first see these yellow people always say at once, "They are Japanese." Father Petitot, one of the first missionaries to the Eskimos of Mackenzie mouth, or of Alaska, has left us the following description: "The Eskimo has the round, broad, flat features of the Mongol race. From the cheek-bones upwards the head narrows to a rather conical cranium. The cheeks are full and plump; the mouth is wide, and usually wide open, over a pendulous lip; the beard is short—only a goatee, or chin-tuft—stiff, and straight, like the hair of the head; the eyes are small, black, narrow, and slanting, and they shine with a snake-like brilliancy. The Eskimo complexion is a dull brown, or dusky yellow. The hair is coal-black, thick, lank and brittle. The Eskimo women are neat and tidy; they are fat, and also (at least when not forty) more nearly fair in complexion than the

men; their features are more delicate, and their cheeks have a better colour. They are blobber-lipped; yet the upper lip is usually tip-tilted, as in the case of Tartar and Cossack women. If their nose may fairly be called snub, their forehead is high. Their eyes are sparkling, and less narrow than the men's. They dress their hair on the top of their head, like the Chinese and Japanese women. The Eskimos are rather above than below the middle height. Some of the men are very tall; the women, as a rule, are rather stumpy. The Eskimos are well made, and broad-shouldered. They are expert in gymnastic exercises, capital dancers, and perfect mimics."

After this picture painted by Father Petitot in such lively colours, we must proceed to say something about the good, and also the bad, qualities of the Eskimos. They are by no means devoid of natural virtues. Their hospitality, in its quite Oriental demonstrativeness, seems to be usually quite sincere, though it will be all the more demonstrative if masking preparations for treachery. They receive a stranger with much courtesy. Father Le Roux, only three months before he was murdered, wrote as follows: "This second time also I was received by the Eskimos with signs of joy. During my whole time with them I was treated as a guest of distinction. There was only one tent in the camp, but they gave me the best place in it, and told me to consider the tent my own. In fact, the owner used to ask leave to come in. At meals, the best bits were always given to me."

Father Rouvière also gave a very good account of his hospitable reception by these same Eskimos. He was very hopeful of their conversion, though there might be many hardened ones amongst them.

One cannot help remarking among the Eskimos a certain deliberate coolness of judgement, or indeed what may be called stoicism. It is a point of honour with the race never to be betrayed into anything like weakness in decision or action. They are able to conceal their real emotions under an appearance of complete calm. Father Petitot long ago, and in the present day Father Turquetil (at Chesterfield Inlet, Hudson Bay), thought it likely that the Eskimos, with their natural tenacity, would one day be as deeply attached to the Christian religion as they now are to their pagan ideas.

Intellectually, the Eskimos are by no means ill-endowed. They are eager to learn; they quickly understand what is taught; and they have good memories. They are always



TYPICAL ESKIMOS

in good humour, and they laugh very heartily over a jolly story. The fact that they are able to live, and to find the means of subsistence, where life is a perpetual battle with the elements, is in itself sufficient proof of their intelligence and resourcefulness. They have none of those tools which we consider indispensable, and yet they make for themselves, much better than we could, the weapons and utensils or other objects needful for their comfort and convenience. Their little kayak or boat is a marvel. It is a very light, narrow skiff, made of porpoise skin, sewed together over very frail circular bands. It gives room for just one boatman who, with one paddle, makes it fly along the water, though he knows the slightest false move would capsize it.

The Eskimos often find iron in the wrecks upon their coasts, and they know how to forge it as well as any blacksmith. They make for themselves a terrible two-edged knife. They have a surprising taste for chiselling or carving. They polish with much delicacy the tusks of the walrus and the bones of the reindeer. They make them into knife-handles, darts, dice, needles, needle-cases, ear-rings and other ornaments, fish-hooks, etc. Many a European artist might take lessons from an Eskimo engraver. It is remarkable that the points of their arrows and harpoons, in flint, or ivory, or jade, resemble those of Assyrian and Egyptian weapons.

One of the most surprising things among the Eskimos is that they are able to live and thrive without fires, where the cold is greatest and the winter longest. They know quite well how to strike a light, without having our lucifer matches. They even keep a little lamp burning, the wick being a tuft of moss, and the oil fish-oil, or oil of the white whale, or of the seal. But the Eskimo is usually far away from all combustible matter, and so he has invented a way of his own for protecting himself against the cold. As soon as the solid ice surrounds him, and the frozen snow, he leaves his conical tent of seal or deer-skin, and builds his iglou, or snow-house. This is a marvel of human ingenuity, which makes the cold itself to be man's protection from the cold. Very quickly the iglou is built. With his great iron knife the Eskimo cuts out some square, or rectangular, blocks of the frozen snow. These blocks, slightly dove-tailed, are laid together to form a complete circle. Upon these blocks, other blocks are piled, tier after tier, tapering towards the top, until the comfortable iglou is quite complete. When what we may call the keystone of the dome has been placed in its due position, the next operation is to cut away,

on the ground level, in one block, as much of the snow as will leave room for a man to creep into the hut. On the icy floor a bear-skin or deer-skin is spread. And the door is easily shut, almost hermetically, by replacing the last piece of clever carving done with the Eskimo knife.

Europeans are almost stifled to death in the heavy and murky atmosphere of an iglou, with its oil lamp, tobacco smoke, greasy and rancid food, etc. But the Eskimo enjoys the comfort of his home, which quickly becomes the luxury of a Turkish bath. There is no need to be encumbered with clothes in an iglou. Some strokes of the big knife make a hole in the roof to admit a little air, allowing the heated air to whistle its way out. Nevertheless, the frozen walls soon begin to "run," and they are gradually changed into closely cemented walls of ice, through which the moonlight faintly appears. When this change has come about, the snow has lost its power to protect from the cold, and a fresh iglou has to be built. The large snow-houses, intended for more than a night's shelter, usually last two or three weeks. They are made to hold the provisions got together during the hunting and fishing seasons. There are villages of iglous on the Frozen Ocean.

In the summer season, the Eskimos usually have plenty of food. In the winter, they are often hungry. They may not have laid in a sufficient stock of provisions. Or the storms which rage from December to March may be so continuous as to hinder them from reaching the blow-holes where the seals force a way up to breathe. In either of these cases the Eskimos may have to eat their moccasins, their quivers and bowstrings, and even their garments. Being so often accustomed to eat bad meat or fish, they have quite a depraved taste in food. Many of them prefer to keep venison until it has grown, as they consider, quite appetizing. Is it not said that Kaffirs in South Africa also have a special liking for rotten eggs, and the flesh of diseased animals?

Fish or flesh in the Arctic takes a long time to thaw—let us not say to cook—in an earthen pot hanging over an oil lamp. Hence the Eskimos, so often suddenly hungry, have been accustomed to eat their food raw. The Algonquin Abenakis, of Labrador, two hundred years ago, gave them the name of Eskimantick—*i.e.*, eaters of raw flesh. Father de Charlevoix, S.J., in his *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, calls them Esquimaux. This name was adopted generally by European writers and by the French Academy.

The Eskimos call themselves by a very different name—

Innoït—*i.e.*, the Men (*par excellence*). The Eskimos of the Mackenzie mouths call their nearest neighbours (*viz.*, the Loucheux) the Itkreleït, meaning Vermin Tents. "They are the offspring of the nits of our lice," say the Eskimos; "that is why we call them Itkreleït." About their own origin the Eskimos have a legend rather like that of the Dog-ribs. They tell about the first woman and the great dog. Where the first woman came from, they do not say. But some of her children were human beings, and some were dogs. The "humans" remained on the shores of the Arctic. These are *the* Men, Innoït. The dogs their mother put in a shoe, and committed to the ocean. These were carried away and cast upon many shores. From them are descended the various races of mankind—white, brown, red, and yellow—according to the colour of the dogs in the shoe. Hence all men are brethren. But the whites come nearest to the Innoïts.

We have spoken of some natural good qualities of the Eskimos. But they have their vices too. What we are going to say must not, however, be understood of all, or even of most of them.

The Eskimos are great liars. Among themselves nearly everything is publicly known, no matter how wicked. But strangers "are fooled to the top of their bent." Skill in deceiving is common to the Eskimos and the Red Indians. When once the plotters have made up a tale, and can rely upon each other, they will not vary upon the original version, even under the threat of death. To read a secret in their face, and in that of the Sphinx, would be equally easy. The assassins of two Oblate missionaries repeated word for word, four years after the crime, the story invented for the first whites who made inquiries. The Arctic Expedition under Doctor Anderson was for a long time in the seas frequented by the tribe to which the murderers belonged. But they could never succeed in finding the slightest clue to any truthful information about the fate of Fathers Rouvière and le Roux. The natives, when questioned about the soutanes, Mass vestments, chalice, and breviaries found in their possession, invariably replied, with the most innocent look, and with many invented details, that these articles had been given to them by white men.

The Eskimos are thieves also. Lying and thieving naturally go together. Even the best disposed of the Eskimos find it extremely hard not to covet—and to take—their neighbour's goods. Among them, as among the Spartans of old, the thief caught in the act blushes not for what he

has done, but for being found out. And he is punished only for his stupidity in letting himself be caught. Father Rouvière, who had some good things to say about his Eskimos, complained also more than once of having been robbed by them. His successor, Father Frapsauce, wrote as follows:

“Many of them you would take to be upright and honest. They look so frank. They are good hunters and in want of nothing. Yet they steal whenever they can. Of the two huts left by the murdered Oblates, only the walls remain. The Eskimos removed everything else, not leaving even one nail. Iron, even the smallest piece, is most valuable to them, and they will go any distance to find it. They will pull down a house to get a piece of iron in the foundation. If you fix pot-hook and hanger in the wall of your fireplace, the Eskimos, in your absence, will pull down the wall, in order to take away the iron as a prize. They do not always go to work so roughly. A friend, who was exploring to the east of Great Bear Lake, once told me how cleverly they had robbed him. As he sat in his tent some Eskimos came to sell him reindeer skins, for which he gave in exchange powder and shot, tea, tobacco, shirts, etc. New-comers constantly arrived. The white man, as he received each hide, laid or threw it down behind him, and handed out its price to some one of the crowd in front, which soon filled his tent. When he had nothing more with which he was willing to part, the sale was ended. Then the Eskimos took their leave, with many smiles and bows and compliments, which my friend returned with all possible politeness and friendly appreciation. When the last visitor was gone, he turned to examine and count his treasures. Not even one hide was to be seen! While some of his customers had kept him busy in front, near the door of the tent, others were quickly lifting the borders of the tent at the back, and bringing round each skin to be sold two or three or four times over. And when all had been well sold, the buyer was left without even one. . . . Even the caches of the dreaded Mounted Police are not safe, if the Eskimos once find them.”

It must be added also that the Eskimos will not stop at murder when they are bent upon robbery. And they bring to bear upon the execution of a murderous plan the same coolness, calculation, patience, and skill which they learn in their long hours of watching and harpooning the fierce walrus. When the moment comes, the fatal stroke is given, always in the back. An officer of the Hudson Bay Company, named Livingstone, who went amongst them to estab-

lish a trading post, was treacherously led into an islet of the Mackenzie, where he and all the members of his escort were massacred. Franklin, Richardson, Puller, and Hooper were saved from the like fate only by the number of their followers, and the terror inspired by their firearms. In 1912, Street and Radford were killed by the Eskimos, eastward of Coronation Gulf. There were other explorers and traders who never returned from those Arctic regions. Neither was any trace ever found either of themselves or of their ships.

It is plain therefore that "to preach the Gospel" with any success to those who are so "poor" in all respects is a very hard task. Pride, lying, thieving, murder, and immorality are surely enormous hindrances to the acceptance of the Gospel and the Decalogue. Nevertheless, there is a still greater hindrance—viz., superstition or sorcery (shamanism). We will quote once more Fr. Frapsauce, who shows the two sides of the medal:

"The Eskimos are a very light-hearted folk. A good-humoured person, knowing their language, and joking without difficulty, would be safe amongst them, I think. They are very intelligent, and they work very hard. The Red Indians are often called grown children. The Eskimos are nothing of the kind. They are neither childish nor boastful. The Dénés are always asking you to admire their handiwork—and sometimes not without reason. The Eskimos, on the contrary, are the first to call your attention to the mistakes they have made, and to explain how they will do better the next time.

"Some of the Eskimos are really good and good-natured, and I find it hard to speak ill of the race. But, to make a faithful report, I must say that their moral state is most deplorable. They do not usually send away their wives. But among friends they lend them very freely. There is no sort of indecency which is not prevalent amongst them. There are very few of them who are not confirmed robbers and liars. They often abandon their children, who happen to be born in the summer season. In 1916, I had a narrow escape from death at the hands of Anantclick, a friend of Sinnisiak, one of the murderers of our two missionaries. In 1917, Inspector French of the Mounted Police had a similar experience. And yet even the Eskimos have a wholesome fear of that efficient force, which has made them realize that the Canadian authority has a very long arm. To conclude, I would say that immorality and covetousness are the deadly sins most in vogue among our poor Eskimos,

and, incidentally, murder may be added to these, when it seems profitable."

Such, then, are the souls whom some Oblates of Mary Immaculate have been trying for half a century to translate from death to life, from the power of the Evil One to the liberty of the Gospel of God's grace.

Attempts to convert the Eskimo race have been made in five different regions of the Far North—viz., at the mouths of the Mackenzie, on the northern shores of Alaska, on the Labrador coast, in the neighbourhood of Chesterfield Inlet (Hudson Bay), and between Great Bear Lake and Coronation Gulf.

In 1860, Father Grollier, from his mission at Fort Good Hope (on the Mackenzie, south of the Arctic Circle), twice visited the Eskimos of the Mackenzie mouths, and the islands between Fort MacPherson and Herschel Island. His labours and hardships deserved success, but could not command it, except in a very small way. His successors, Fathers Séguin and Petitot, were equally triumphant in failure. After three visits, in 1865-7, to the Tchiglit Eskimos at the mouth of the Anderson River, Liverpool Bay, Father Petitot (who had baptized one dying person, and no more) wrote: "I left them with a very sad heart. I had been able to do no more than speak to them of the existence of God, of immortality, of redemption. They listened with amusement and mockery. Such words seemed to them like the funny fairy tales at which European children laugh. Yet these cynical robbers and sea-rovers would make excellent Christians, if the gift of Faith were once implanted in their manly breasts." At a later date, Father Lefebvre tried to evangelize the Eskimos, both at Fort MacPherson and Richards Island, which he visited twice, and at Herschel Island, where he visited the Natavel tribe three times. But he made little or no impression upon them. He just baptized a few children, or adults who were at the point of death. His occasional visits during seven years (1890-7) had little effect upon the ingrained heathenism of those who had not been prepared for Catholicity, like the Indians, by continuous intercourse with the old *coureurs des bois*. A new difficulty also arose. Protestantism became known to the Eskimos at Fort MacPherson, and likewise—by means of the Pacific Whaling Company of San Francisco—at Herschel Island. The Eskimos have not shown the same dislike for Protestant as for Catholic preaching.

In another region, a second attempt was made to reach the souls of the Eskimo people. From October, 1873, to

September, 1874, Father Lecorre followed the bays of the Alaskan coast from Point (or Cape) Barrow to St Michael, preaching wherever he could. During his journeys he was often in such danger from the weapons of the shamans (sorcerers) that he attributed his escape to a very special intervention of divine Providence. He was able to baptize many children. When Bishop Clut left him at Fort Yukon, it was because there then seemed to be a good prospect of a permanent mission there. In 1874, the Holy See sent the zealous Bishop Seghers (of British Columbia) to Alaska. A few years later the Jesuit Fathers accepted the charge of the Alaskan missions. Father Lecorre had to some extent prepared the way for those very efficient missionaries.

The Eskimos of the Labrador coast were also sought out by several Oblate missionaries, and at various dates. Of Father Lacasse, who spent two years (1875-7) among them, we know the following details. When he arrived (from the Bethsiamits Mission, Quebec Province) at the Baie des Esquimaux, he found the natives were very strongly prejudiced against the Catholic religion. They were under the influence of the "Moravian Brethren," very prosperous fur-traders, who occupied an immense stretch of the Labrador coast. Father Lacasse pushed on northwards through their territory, until he reached the pagan Eskimos. Amid these he did some good, in spite of many and great difficulties. He learned their language well, and wrote a dictionary of it. But his manuscripts, and all his personal effects, were lost in the Atlantic Ocean, in the wreck of a ship on which he had failed at the last moment to take passage himself. The description given by Father Lacasse of the pronunciation of the Eskimo *k* or *kh* is worth preserving. "Learning to pronounce the *k* would give you a sore throat. You have to fetch up a sound from the pit of the stomach, arrest it as it passes through the throat, hurl it violently into the nose, then, in spite of your repugnance, and in spite of all laws of motion, you must bring it back into the throat, there to receive its death-stroke."

Some recent travellers have written admiringly of the change for good wrought by the Oblate Fathers among the natives of Labrador.

A fourth field of their labours for the Eskimo tribes has been the neighbourhood of Chesterfield Inlet, on the north-west coast of Hudson Bay. It is chiefly in this twentieth century that successful mission work has been accomplished there—namely, by Father Turquetil and other Oblates,

who reside permanently at Chesterfield Inlet. However, even so long ago as 1868, Father Gasté, the missionary of the Montagnais Indians of Reindeer (or Caribou) Lake, interested himself in the Eskimos of the shores of Hudson Bay. All that he could do in their favour was to induce some of them to bring their furs, in due season, to Reindeer Lake instead of Fort Churchill. Churchill is on Hudson Bay. Caribou or Reindeer is on the north-east of the modern province of Saskatchewan. The youthful Father Turquetil became Father Gasté's assistant in 1900. On the morrow of Christmas Day in 1901 he set out on his first expedition into the northern Barren Lands of Keewatin, a portion of the North-West Territories, not now marked out as a separate portion on the maps. Ever afterwards, he tried to hasten the day when he might be allowed to evangelize the Eskimos. At last in 1912, by way of Montreal, the St Lawrence, the Atlantic, and Hudson Strait, he reached Chesterfield Inlet, bringing with him provisions, fuel, and the material for making a house. He was accompanied by Father Le Blanc, and they founded the Mission of Notre Dame de la Délivrance.

Our Lady there had her sorrows and her joys. A great sorrow was the death of Father Le Blanc. After four years of isolation, and many trials, he was on his way back to civilization and a physician's care, when he was lost at sea on September 21, 1916. The joy at our Lady's Mission was the baptism on July 2, 1917, of twelve Eskimos. They had been well instructed, and well tried, as their perseverance, in spite of pagan taunts, has proved. Father Turquetil has probably a still fuller knowledge of the Eskimo tongue than was gained by Father Lacasse. He says it is made up of root-words, or sounds, conveying the principal ideas. The syntax is perfectly logical. The rules allow no exceptions. The root-words are natural signs, rather than conventional, and the language, considered in its elements, is far richer and more harmonious than any European tongue. It is remarkable that all Eskimo words represent abstractions (a quality, a state, an action), whereas Déné words always express what is concrete (*i.e.*, mean some real thing). Father Turquetil says that, with a teacher, one might learn Eskimo fairly well in half a year.

We come now, in the fifth place, to what concerns us most in this book—viz., the Eskimo mission of the Mackenzie Vicariate Apostolic. In 1911, the Right Reverend Bishop Breynat set apart for this mission two very zealous young

priests, Fathers Rouvière and Le Roux. Their "parish" was the basin of the Coppermine River, Coronation Gulf, with its archipelago from Cape Bexley to Kent Peninsula, and the immense Victoria Island. The Coppermine, flowing north, after passing the Dismal Lakes, runs within very high banks, and is often a raging torrent, very deep and wide. About five miles before it reaches Coronation Gulf the river tumbles into a long fissure still called Bloody Fall, the name given to it by Samuel Hearne in 1771. Hearne, the first explorer of that region, had been on that occasion the helpless witness of the massacre of a peaceable Eskimo tribe by his own Red Indian guides and servants. The Coppermine rises, and runs seaward, in those "Barren Lands," which have been compared to the Russian steppes or tundra. A line drawn from the middle of the Mackenzie delta to the mouth of the Churchill River, and bending a little towards the south, would, along with the Arctic Ocean, fairly well form the boundary of those "Bad Lands" or barren regions. Those regions are rocky, and in parts even mountainous, but, in their wide undulating plains, they hold many small lakes and muskegs. The home of the polar storms is there, and the barrenness of the ground is perpetual. The west bank of the Coppermine River is wooded till within twenty-five miles of the ocean, but only with poor stunted specimens of spruce or fir, seeking shelter behind rocks that are "few and far between." During the short summer the western Barren Lands—which have been compared to Irish bogs, or Breton *landes*—are dressed out quite gaudily with a wealth of laughing flowers, and are enlivened by the twittering and singing of a multitude of little birds. It is like a change from death to life, all over the scene. But no share in the perfume and melody of such resurrection is allowed to the eastern Barren Lands. The further the wide tundra stretches towards Hudson Bay, the more completely is it smitten with sterility. The same lake or stream, whose southern bank is verdant, shows only naked and stony death on the north. In the plains, the width of a ploughshare divides desolation from growing greenery. On the desolate side, there is naught but rocky and frozen ground, with lichen and spongy mosses, the food of the reindeer and the "ovibos," or musk-ox.

It is said that the granite layers of the Barren Lands hold quantities of precious metals. Copper, of which the Eskimos make such good use, is found near the surface, in the country drained by the Coppermine, sometimes in mere flakes, sometimes in massive blocks.

Stefannson, the explorer, in 1910, gave the name of the Copper Group to the Eskimo tribes of the Coppermine River, the islands in the Coronation Gulf, and Victoria Island. They live by hunting the whale, the walrus, and the seal, and (in the Barren Lands) the reindeer, the fox (of many colours), the bear (black, grey, or white), the wolf, the musk-ox, etc.

In the spring of 1911, Bishop Breynat learned that a couple of hundred of those Eskimos were to meet the Hare-skin and Dog-rib Indians at Great Bear Lake. He decided at once to make a beginning of his long-considered effort for their conversion. He chose Father John Baptist Rouvière (of the diocese of Mende, in France) to be their first missionary. Father Rouvière, only thirty years of age, ardent, robust, and devout, was specially qualified to undertake such an arduous mission. He had lived, for four consecutive years, at Fort Good Hope, the life of the Far North. He knew perfectly the language of the Hare-skins, who would be his interpreters to the Eskimos. On July 5, 1911, he left Good Hope for Fort Norman, on the Mackenzie. Thence, with his portable "chapel," some tools and provisions, he went by Great Bear River to Great Bear Lake. Then, over the 165 miles of the lake, he reached its northern coast in Dease Bay.

Unfortunately, the Eskimos had struck their camp, and were on the way to their winter quarters on the Arctic. The courageous Father Rouvière followed them. He had to go up the winding and rapid Dease River, for half the way walking in the water, and dragging his canoe. The rapids became more and more difficult and dangerous, and at last he abandoned his canoe, and continued his journey on foot. It was a very toilsome journey. Praying and suffering much, Father Rouvière declared that it was the blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate herself who brought the wandering sheep of his spiritual pasture within his view. It was on Lady Day, August 15, 1911. He thus described the circumstances in a letter to Bishop Breynat pencilled on his knees:

"MY LORD AND BELOVED FATHER,

"You have sent me after the lost sheep of the House of Eskimo. I found them on August 15, at seven o'clock in the evening. I had been praying without ceasing to our blessed Lady, and it was she who guided my steps in the right direction. I had abandoned my canoe, and I had been tramping the steppes for three days, when sud-

denly I saw on the top of a hill three living beings. They might be caribou. They might be men. I hastened my steps in their direction. In ten minutes I saw quite a number of people on the slope of the hill. There could be no further doubt. They were Eskimos. As soon as they saw me they ran forward towards me. Then, before coming too near, they halted, and one advanced alone. After some further steps, he also stood still, lifted up his hands on high, bent his head sideways to the right, and then bowed his whole body towards the earth. These gestures he repeated several times. I responded by lifting up my hands. The Eskimo then began to draw near me, and the others hastened after him. When this cautious courier was near enough to see me well, he turned round to the others and shouted, '*Krablouma*' ('It is a white man'). He then came to me smiling, and stretching out his hand, which I shook very cordially. He next took me by the arm, to present me to all his friends. They took great notice of my soutane and my Oblate cross. I gave them some medals of the blessed Virgin, which I myself hung round their neck. They were quite delighted to have them. They next brought me to their camp, where I shook hands with all who were there. I was invited to join my hosts in a meal, and there was no need to ask me twice, for I had eaten nothing since morning, and I had been on foot all day. After our meal the Eskimos riddled me with questions. I tried to convey to them that I had come to stay amongst them."

Father Rouvière, after this first experience, made up his mind to winter at Lake Imerenick—now called Lake Rouvière at the request of the missionary's friends, the authors of *The Land Forlorn* (Messrs. Douglas). Imerenick is about sixty-five miles north of Dease Bay, amid the poor and sapless fir-trees of that truly Barren Land. Father Rouvière built himself a log cabin near the lake, and there he said the first Mass on September 17, 1911. Evidently he was carrying a pack of some weight during the three days which brought him at length to his Eskimos.

During September and October he was visited by many Eskimo families, as they passed along towards the Arctic. It consoled him to notice that feasts of the blessed Virgin brought them in considerable numbers. He took this as a sign that Mary Immaculate would be the special protectress of the new mission. When the last Eskimos had gone north, he spent the winter all alone, in prayer and manual labour.

In April, 1912, he set out in his dog-sled for Fort Norman, in search of his promised socius. This was Father William Le Roux, born in 1885, in the diocese of Quimper. He had arrived in the Mackenzie Vicariate, from the scholasticate at Liège, in Belgium, a year earlier. He was a very gifted young priest, able to learn new languages quickly with remarkable ease, and enjoying perfect bodily health. The two priests left Fort Norman in mid-July, 1912. On August 27, they were in their log-cabin at Lake Imerenick. During the autumn they made acquaintance with many Eskimos, and Father Le Roux set himself very eagerly to learn their language. But the two priests soon came to the conclusion that, to have a chance of converting the Eskimos, they would have to go and live among them in the Arctic itself. Those who might be seen at Great Bear Lake, or at Imerenick, were always very busy birds of passage. The two Oblate Fathers purposed, therefore, to go to Coronation Gulf in the autumn of 1913. It was their wish to communicate with the Bishop. He had indeed given them a wide discretion, but they desired to have his formal approval of their plan. The spring and summer of 1913 passed without their having any chance of exchanging letters with Bishop Breynat. On August 30, 1913, they received a letter from Mr. Joe Bernard, captain of a schooner. He had spent two years among the Eskimos of Coronation Gulf. He thought the moment favourable for the foundation of a mission in their midst. And he promised to help the missionaries in any way that he could. The Indian who brought this letter was going south. By him Father Rouvière wrote a few lines to Mgr. Breynat, saying, "I am sending your Lordship Joe Bernard's note. It has helped us to a conclusion. We are about to start. Give us your blessing. And may our blessed Lady guard and guide us."

Thereupon followed an agonizing silence of three years.

In 1914, Mr. D'Arcy Arden, an explorer, met in the Barren Lands some Eskimos wearing soutanes and priestly vestments. But when he inquired about the two white men who had visited the Eskimo country the year before, he got evasive and contradictory answers. Still, the worst might not have happened. The Eskimos might have robbed the Catholic mission hut during the absence of the priests.

One of the Hare-skin Indians of Great Bear Lake said: "The Fathers told us that perhaps they would be absent for two years, as they meant to go along with the Eskimos,

no matter how great the distance." These words gave reason for some hope. The drowning will cling to a straw. It was thought the two Fathers might have gone to Victoria Island, and that a premature thaw might have prevented their return over the ice; that they might have feared to trust themselves to a frail kayak (Eskimo canoe), and that they would wait for another winter.

In the spring of 1915, Bishop Breynat, giving up all hope, requested the Canadian Government to send the Mounted Police to inquire into the case. His wishes were most willingly complied with. Inspector La Nauze and Troopers Wight and Withers set out upon the quest, taking with them all things necessary for an absence of two years. From Fort Norman Father Frapsauce accompanied them into the Farther North. But when the party reached their destination they were disappointed. The Eskimos, no doubt suspecting something, had not come that summer. The only information to be had was what was told by the ruins of the priests' cabin at Lake Imerenick. Father Frapsauce had to return sorrowfully to Fort Norman. The police went to Dease Bay, and put up in the house which the missionaries had built there in the spring of 1913. The mills of Justice sometimes have to grind very slowly. At the end of April, 1916, the police went forward once more. In May they reached the first of the Eskimo villages, near the mouth of the Coppermine River. There they questioned the inhabitants very closely and very cleverly, but all in vain. The Eskimos were able to explain every suspicious circumstance. At length the police said to the interpreter. "Ask them straight who killed the two white men." This shot brought down the whole Eskimo defence. The answer came at once, "Sinnisiak and Uluksak." All tongues were instantly loosed, and everyone began to tell what he knew, and to show that he himself was perfectly innocent. They had all heard everything the day after the murder, and they were very sorry that the two "good white men" were killed.

Statements were taken down in writing, including those of the murderers themselves. On the scene of the crime portions were found of a diary on rough paper, kept by Father Rouvière. By means of all these, and the information supplied by Mr. Arden, it was easy enough to set down a detailed account of the whole tragedy.

The two missionaries left Lake Imerenick for an island in the Coppermine estuary on October 8, 1913. Both were unwell. Father Le Roux had a bad cold, and Father

Rouvière was still suffering from a wound which he gave himself when building the house at Dease Bay. They were accompanied by a number of Eskimos, including Sinnisiak and Kormick. The journey of about 100 miles took twelve days. The diary recorded repeatedly, "Intense cold"; "Dreadful weather"; "Wind in our faces"; "Hungry dogs outworn"; "Course we follow extremely rough."

On October 20 or 22, 1913, were written the last words of the diary: "We are at the mouth of the Coppermine River. Some families have left us. We are disappointed in our Eskimos. We may be left to die of hunger." This was the first time that Father Rouvière had anything uncomplimentary to say of those poor people, for the sake of whose souls he had come from so far away. In the journey northward, fishing had been unsuccessful, and game rarely seen. The missionaries had brought some provisions, but these were soon stolen. One night, the Eskimo who had been giving shelter for nearly a week to the two priests stole Father Le Roux's gun from his bedside, and hid it. Although it is the custom among the Eskimos never to refuse to give, yet this last theft could not be overlooked, because for a white man in the wild north to be without a gun is to starve. The gun therefore was recovered by its owner. Thereupon Kormick became furious, and rushed upon Father Le Roux to kill him. An old man named Koha seized Kormick, and saved the priest. Afterwards Koha took the priests aside and said, "Kormick and his friends will harm you. You would do well to go back at once to your hut at Lake Imerenick. You could come to us again next year, and in better company." The old man helped the missionaries to get ready their sled, with its four dogs, and he accompanied them half a day's journey, both to defend them and to set them on the right road. He even helped the dogs in drawing the sled. When they had gone up the Coppermine River a considerable distance, Koha said: "There are no trees here. You will easily find your way. Go straight on, as far as you can go to-day. I love you, and I would not allow anyone to injure you." After a cordial hand-shake, he went back to his tribe.

The two missionaries had four more nights to live. Of the first three we know nothing except that they had no tent and no firewood, and that the cold was intense. During the second night Sinnisiak and Uluksak slipped away from their tribe, and followed up the tracks of the dog-sled in the snow. In the middle of the day they overtook the missionaries. The priests were more than sus-

picious, for they knew Sinnisiak had a bad reputation, and was a friend of Kormick's. However, they accepted the company of the new arrivals, who pretended that they were going to meet some friends, who had been delayed on their way back from Great Bear Lake. "It is for those friends we are bringing these two dogs; we will help in drawing your sled, until we meet our people," said the intending assassins. That evening those two Eskimos camped out near the river, at some distance from the priests. Next morning they came back, but that day gave them no opportunity of striking their victims. At night they built an iglou, in which all four took their rest. The law of hospitality is sacred in the Eskimo snow-house. Next day the group of four marched on in this order: Father Rouvière, on his rackets, walked first, beating down the snow in front of the dogs. The Eskimos drew the sled, which Father Le Roux guided safely from behind, just as the ploughman guides the plough.

After some time a blinding snow-storm arose. Sinnisiak said a few words to the other Eskimo, and they both slipped off the harness. Sinnisiak came behind the sled, but naturally Father Le Roux watched him. Then, by word and gesture, the Eskimo made a pretence so that the priest had to look away, and immediately he rushed upon Father Le Roux, and stabbed him in the back. The priest, uttering a cry, ran forward, but he had hardly got beyond the length of the sled when Uluksak threw himself upon him. Sinnisiak shouted, "Finish him; I will do for the other." Father Le Roux, putting his hands on the shoulders of Uluksak, pitifully appealed to him. In vain, however, for he was immediately stabbed twice—viz., in the stomach and in the heart.

Meanwhile, Father Rouvière, hearing the cry, came hurrying back. Seeing Father Le Roux fall in the snow, and Sinnisiak raising the gun he had lifted from the sled, Father Rouvière tried to escape in the direction of the river. The first ball sent after him missed him. The second brought him to the ground. The two Eskimos then ran towards him. "Finish him," said Sinnisiak once more. Uluksak plunged the still dripping blade into his side. Father Rouvière fell at full length upon the reddened ground. While he was still breathing and his lips moved, Sinnisiak went back to the sled, took out the hatchet, and cut off the priest's legs, and hands, and head. Uluksak then cut open the body, took out part of the liver, and the two monsters ate it. They then threw their

victim's body into a ravine, went back to Father Le Roux, cut him open, and ate his liver.

When all was over, they took the guns and ammunition, and went back to their camp. As soon as they arrived they said to Kormick, "We have killed the white men."

The crime was committed between October 28 and November 2, 1913, in the afternoon, about twenty miles from the Arctic coast, on the left bank of the Coppermine River, about eight miles south of Bloody Fall.

Next day a number of Eskimos set out for the scene of the murder, where they found the four dogs guarding the dead. Some of the Eskimos, like Kormick, took possession of whatever effects they could find. Others, like old Koha, bewailed the deaths of "the good white men."

Koha deposed: "I was very sorry to hear of their deaths, and I went to see. I saw the body of a dead man beside the sled. It was Ilogoak [Father Le Roux], and I began to weep. I did not see Kouliavik [Father Rouvière]. The face of Ilogoak was almost hidden by the snow. He was lying on his back, his head a little lifted. I loved those good whites. They were very kind to us."

Three years after the assassination—viz., on June 3, 1916—Trooper Wight was guided to the spot by an Eskimo named Mayouk. He found the wooden frame of the sled, and near it a jaw-bone, with all its teeth perfect and white. Mayouk said it was Father Le Roux's, and had been thrown there the year before by one who passed by. The constable wishing to see the very place of Father Le Roux's death, Mayouk brought him some yards farther, towards the left bank of the river. There Mr. Wight found some marks made by the claws of beasts of prey, and many pieces of bone which had dropped from their jaws. Mayouk next showed him a hollow in the bed of a stream which flows into the Coppermine, and said the body of Father Rouvière was there under six feet of ice and clay. Time did not permit the recovery of the body. Mr. Wight had to content himself with making two crosses out of the remains of the sledge and planting them in the two deserted spots where the missionaries met their death.

In August, 1917, the Eskimo murderers were tried in Edmonton, Alberta. The jury failed to convict them. Were they moved by mere anti-Catholic prejudice, or did they consider that an Eskimo cannot be expected to value human life as much as a civilized person (which is not saying very much in these days), or did they think that the priest ought not to have got his stolen gun? At all events, the Canadian

authorities were not content with the jurymen. The venue was changed to Calgary, where the two Eskimos were convicted, and sentenced to death. It was thought wiser not to carry out the sentence. The Right Reverend Bishop Breynat himself appealed to the Minister of Justice in favour of the criminals. They had a very mild sort of imprisonment, under the care of the Mounted Police, at Fort Resolution, Great Slave Lake, quite near the Bishop and the Catholic Institutions. In 1919, the Bishop again interceded for the culprits, and Sinnisiak and Uluksak were sent back to their own tribe in the Farthest North.

Such lives and deaths as those of the two young Oblate priests have surely much of martyrdom in them. One of these apostles of the North was thirty-two years of age, the other twenty-seven. So far away from their own sunny land, beyond a waste of seas, and then a waste of snow and ice, after suffering many hardships, they laid down their lives for an ungrateful people. In the providence of God, their blood-shedding will cause the icy desert to blossom with spiritual blessings. The conversion of the Eskimos has begun at Chesterfield Inlet. And from Coronation Gulf have come several messages to Mgr. Breynat asking him to send priests. That truly apostolic Bishop is trying to find the priests, whether in America or in Europe, priests full of the same spirit as those brave women who have so well "laboured in the Gospel," those "Grey Nuns in the Far North," some of whom have lately said that they would be very happy to be sent on the Eskimo mission, because "to be there would be doing missionary work indeed." We have declared before now that the perpetual winter, the infectious iglou, and the degraded condition of the Eskimos, do not frighten or fret the Grey Nuns. So it is also with the Oblate Fathers. Whilst the Bishop of the Mackenzie is waiting for expected and much needed help from some generous souls preparing for the priesthood, he has been able to make some beginning of an Eskimo mission, near the coast of the frozen ocean. Not indeed without new and great trial and loss. Fathers Frapsauce and Falaize were set apart for this mission, yet not as if told off for a forlorn hope. And if they were chosen, all their brethren of the Vicariate were equally willing to go. Father Frapsauce in 1919 went first. On October 21, 1920, Father Falaize reached the still unfurnished chapel built by his leader. But that colleague himself was absent. Being in want of provisions, he had gone to a

distance to fish in a frozen lake. He might return any day, it was said. On October 25, Father Falaize, being anxious, set out to look for his fellow-missionary. He came indeed upon the tracks of his sled, but these led him to a great hole in the ice, where Father Frapsauce, with his dogs and sled, had gone down the previous day. Another sacrifice had been made in the cause of the conversion of the Eskimos. All faithful souls will give to the same cause at least the tribute of their sympathies and their prayers.

On Christmas Day, 1920, Father Falaize, at the Eskimo mission near Great Bear Lake, gathered in the first-fruits of a spiritual harvest in the fields of ice, baptizing three adults and two children. The first chapel for the Eskimos will, by the Bishop's desire, be dedicated to our Lady, Queen of the Rosary, and it may be said of such sacred edifice that it is raised on high *saxis de viventibus*, since it stands for the cause in which devoted missionaries risked and lost their lives.

Some relics, as they may well be called, of the first Eskimo missionaries of the Farthest North have been found and reverently collected. They include a chalice, a breviary, soutanes, Oblate crosses, a blood-stained altar-cloth, etc. These were solemnly set apart and laid out in honour before the eyes of the youthful Oblate scholastics at Edmonton, on the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary, September 12, 1917. They make the beginning of what may be called, in imitation of a famous Parisian shrine, *La Salle des Martyrs*.

APPENDIX

THE OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE

ONLY forty-three years had elapsed from the foundation of the Religious Institute of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and only thirty-three years from the date of its formal approbation by the Church, when Father Grollier planted the Cross of Christ "at the very end of the earth."

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate, at first a body of priests known as the Missionaries of Provence, were brought into being by a zealous young priest named Charles Joseph Eugene de Mazenod in 1816. They received their present name, and canonical approbation, from Pope Leo XII in 1826.

In English, the life of the Founder has been told, in some measure, in the volumes, *Bishop de Mazenod: His Inner Life and Virtues* (Washbourne, London; Benziger, New York, 1909), and *Sketches of the Life of Mgr. de Mazenod*, by Father Cooke, O.M.I. (revised edition, Dollard, Dublin, 1914).

Eugene de Mazenod belonged to a Provençal family of *la noblesse de la robe*. His grandfather and father were Judges at the same time. His father was a President *à mortier* of the Parliament (Supreme Court) of Provence. Eugene was born in 1782 at Aix, the capital of Provence. His father, though one of those elected by the Provençal nobles as their Deputies to the States General, was one of the many who went into exile in the early years of the Great Revolution. In April, 1791, Eugene, his only son, was brought to him at Nice, then an Italian town. Eugene's years of boyhood were spent in Italy. The family and friends moved, as the French armies advanced. Nice, Turin, Venice, Naples, Palermo successively sheltered them. President de Mazenod, as an adherent of the old régime, remained out of France until the Restoration. Eugene and his mother accepted amnesty (for having saved their lives by exile), returned to France in 1802, and succeeded in regaining some of the property with which young men had been "financing themselves" during times of disturbance and distress.

Eugene, a young man of twenty in 1802, entered, as soon as he was free, the Seminary of St Sulpice, where he was a distinguished and favoured pupil of M. Emery. In 1811 he was ordained priest, not by Cardinal Maury (supposed Vicar Capitular of Paris), but by an old family friend, Mgr. de Mandolx, Bishop of Amiens, who wished also to keep the young priest as his Vicar General.

De Mazenod, however, had other views. He had no wish for ease or honour. He had indeed thoughts of a foreign mission for himself, but he quickly fell in with the views of Pope Pius VII, who considered that France, after the years in which Christianity had been denounced as *le fanatisme*, was the most important foreign mission in the whole world.

One hundred years ago, even the best educated people in the south spoke their old Provençal language. Father de Mazenod made up his mind to preach to the plain people of Aix, the neglected and neglectful, in the tongue which was to them familiar and dear. In 1816, with only one other priest (Father Tempier), he formed the beginnings of a religious and missionary community. In 1818, there were half a dozen priests, and three younger clerics, in the little society called the Missionaries of Provence, or (until they feared they were intruding) Oblates of St Charles.

Very soon, not without Eugene de Mazenod's influence, the See of Marseilles (one of those disestablished by the Concordat of 1802) was restored, and Fortuné de Mazenod, Eugene's uncle, was named Bishop. The growing missionary society stood in need of an episcopal protector, especially at a time when diocesan claims were necessarily very urgent. On his part, the hard-working missionary served his aged and holy uncle very efficiently as Vicar General, and as Provost of a new Chapter.

In 1826, Provost de Mazenod of Marseilles was in Rome, asking for approval of the new missionary institute and its rules. He had gone there by the advice of Father Albini, the cause of whose beatification reached the Apostolic See in 1915. In Rome in 1826 there were still dignitaries who remembered the services rendered to Napoleon's "Black Cardinals" in Paris by the St Sulpice student, Eugene de Mazenod, who knew Italian so well. The Marseilles Vicar General was most graciously received by Pope Leo XII, who approved also very highly the projected mission work laid before him, and the spirit in which it was undertaken. On February 17, 1826, His Holiness signed the document giving canonical existence to the new Congregation of the *Missionarii Oblati Sanctissimæ et Immaculatæ Virginis Mariæ*.



MGR. DE MAZENOD

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In limited numbers, these missionaries had been labouring, with much consoling success, for fifteen years more, in Provence, Dauphiny, and Corsica, when in 1841, the second Bishop of Montreal, the saintly Mgr. Bourget, passed through Marseilles on his way to Rome. The Founder and Superior General of the Oblates was then Bishop of Marseilles, a See which, for twenty years longer, he occupied with much distinction as well as zeal. "Il avait le génie de l'épiscopat; he was one of the greatest Bishops of our day," said Mgr. Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans. Mgr. Bourget had in various quarters applied in vain for a religious community to give missions in his diocese. In Marseilles he appealed to Bishop de Mazenod. He was not refused, and all the Oblates of that day, when consulted, were willing to cross the ocean, and to face the unknown.

Four Fathers and two Lay Brothers, after a trying journey of two months from Marseilles, via Havre, New York, and the Hudson River, reached Montreal in December, 1841. They were the first religious to arrive since the country had been under the English Crown. The last Jesuit had died in 1800, the last Recollect in 1813. Only the Sulpicians, those eminent teachers of the clergy, had been able to hold their own. Very soon the Oblates—increasing their numbers by little and little—were busy in mission work, in town and country, among white men and natives, from the wild places where the dioceses of Montreal, New York, and Boston met and overlapped, to the coast of Labrador. Saguenay, Abbitibi, Lake Temiskaming, the Rivers Ottawa, Mattawan, and St Maurice were some of the familiar names in those early reports of theirs which might well have formed a collection of *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*. Those Oblate pioneers were the foundations—hidden, as foundations usually are—of many parishes, and indeed, it may be said, of the dioceses of Ottawa, Chicoutimi, Pembroke, Mont Laurier, and Haileybury.

In 1845, the Oblates went into the west, "to grow up with the country," and to help the country to grow. They were brought there by the first Bishop in Red River, or Rupert's Land, Mgr. Provencher, who had failed to find religious helpers in the older Orders. In 1845 began those apostolic labours which have made Father Fournet eulogize the Oblates as "the Apostles of the North-West." Indeed, fifteen of them have been the pioneer Bishops in that once entirely wild and lone land—even still, in great measure, wild and lone—which extends from Ontario to the Pacific and Alaska, and from the United States to the Arctic.

There is an immense country which, even now, bears the name of the North-West Territories, but out of the old territories have been formed the organized civil provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, with which the Canadian Pacific Railway linked up British Columbia. An Oblate was the first Archbishop of St Boniface (to which Winnipeg or Fort Garry was only an out-station), an Oblate the first Archbishop of Edmonton; the first Vicar Apostolic of Athabaska, the first of Mackenzie, the first of Keewatin, the first of Yukon and Northern British Columbia; the first Bishop of Prince Albert, the first of New Westminster (now Vancouver Archdiocese). As a secular priest said lately in a public speech at Gravelbourg in Saskatchewan, the Oblates have been the first *à la peine*, though not also *à l'honneur*. It is at least not to their discredit that they have made way for others, as soon as railways were made, and "suitable residences" could be provided. Even still they have the almost exclusive care of the wilder portions of the western half of the Canadian Dominion. In 1845, says the *Catholic Encyclopædia* article, those regions had only one Bishop and six priests; but in 1908 seven Bishops and nearly 400 priests, secular and regular; 150,000 Catholics, 420 churches, 150 schools, and many charitable institutions. "This wonderful progress is due chiefly to the work of the Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate." There has been, of course, a great advance since 1908, but very few statistics are within our reach. As regards the Indians, evangelized chiefly by such Oblates as Father Lacombe, the 1905 Government census gives the total number as 107,000, and the number of Catholics among these as 35,000. In the diocese of Edmonton (formerly St Albert, when it included the present diocese of Calgary), there were, in 1920, for the 40,000 Catholics, 60 parish churches, 188 mission churches or stations, seven religious communities of men (Franciscan, Jesuit, Oblate), 13 convent boarding schools, 4 Indian Industrial schools, 90 Catholic elementary schools, 12 hospitals, an Oblate scholasticate, a juniorate, a Diocesan Seminary, and the Jesuit Classical College. No doubt similar signs of progress are found in the eight other Vicariates or Dioceses now existing in the West. As it is an Irish pen which is writing these lines, justice requires the acknowledgement that Oblate Fathers or Brothers from Ireland have been comparatively few in the Canadian West. The devoted missionaries there have been mostly French, of France or of Canada. It is understood also that the increase in the number of Catholics is due in great measure

to immigration, and that the works of piety and charity accomplished of late years are due to many others beside the Oblates.

In the Northern United States, and in Texas and Mexico (as "The Cavalry of Christ"), the Oblates have been doing missionary and parochial work since 1849.

In Ceylon, the Oblate Fathers began their laborious duties in 1847. Before their arrival the priests (Silvestrines or Goanese) were few in number, under two Vicars Apostolic, one in Colombo, the other in Jaffna. The native Catholics of the Jaffna Vicariate were 50,000; the priests were only 8. The number of Catholics in the whole island at that date we do not know, but in 1796 (date of the British occupation) the whole number was said to be 50,000. The first Oblate Bishop in Jaffna reported in 1861 that 5,000 adults had been received into the Church in the previous five years, in his Vicariate. His successor, Bishop Bonjean, was able to speak in 1880 on behalf of 70,000 Catholics, 40 Oblate Fathers and 5 convents of nuns. There were 260 churches of some sort, a small college, and a Catholic newspaper (in English and Tamil). Where there had been no education—at least, no Catholic education—100 schools and 5 orphanages had been provided, between 1850 and 1880. When, in 1886, the hierarchy was established in India and Ceylon, Mgr. Bonjean was made the first Archbishop of Colombo, the Oblates remaining also in charge of the diocese of Jaffna, and the Silvestrine Benedictines of the diocese of Kandy. In 1893, the Jesuit Fathers of the Belgian Province took charge of two newly formed dioceses, Galle and Trincomalee, both of which have made great progress under their fostering care. The latest statistics available show that there are now in Ceylon 340,000 Catholics, and 65,000 Protestants, in a total population of four millions. The number of Catholics is five times as great as it was 100 years ago. The bulk of the Catholic population is in the city and diocese of Colombo—viz., 250,000. As in other parts of the world, so in Ceylon, the French have been the pioneer missionaries and the most numerous. Oblate Fathers and Brothers from Ireland have, however, done good service there, especially in St Patrick's College, Jaffna, and St Joseph's College, Colombo. Fathers Lytton, Rowley Smythe, Murphy, Dunne, Matthews, Keating, Lanigan, MacCarthy, MacDonald, Wilkinson, Burke, Walshe, Hunt, and Burns are names familiar in Ceylon. Brothers Conway, Brown, and Bennét are still remembered. There are also some Irish nuns in the Ceylon con-

vents. Bishop Semeria, O.M.I., established the first convent in 1867, and now there are about 450 nuns in the island.

The following religious statistics in regard of Ceylon were given for the year 1921:

Total population, 4,500,000. Catholic population of Colombo (diocese), 260,000; priests, 112 (of whom 10 seculars). Jaffna, 55,000; priests, 53 (3 seculars). Kandy, 30,500; priests, 46 (5 seculars). Galle, 13,800; priests, 27 (8 seculars). Trincomalee, 10,700; priests 23 (4 seculars).

In Natal the Oblates have been in charge since 1852. Until then there had been no resident priest. The Catholics of Durban (200) and of Pietermaritzburg (300), who were mostly Irish, were visited occasionally by an Irish priest from the Eastern Vicariate of the Cape. The Oblate Vicariate of Natal has been subdivided into the Vicariates of Natal, the Transvaal, Kimberley (or Orangia), and Basutoland. In these Vicariates a great work has been accomplished, both for the Europeans and for the natives. Basutoland promises to become a true Catholic nation. Its present native ruler, or Paramount Chief, is an instructed and devout Catholic. Many Irish Oblates have been privileged to take part in the missionary labours in South Africa, of whom it is easy to recall the names at least of two Bishops Gaughran, of Fathers Walsh, Kelly, Ryan, Howlett, O'Reilly, Murray, O'Donnell, Conroy, O'Brien, Soye, O'Leary, O'Shea, Miller, Quinlivan, and Varrie, as well as Brothers Mulligan and Tuite and Osborne. Irish nuns, too, are very numerous throughout South Africa. The Irish Christian Brothers and Marist Brothers there are most deserving of mention also.

In 1922, the Holy See made a further subdivision of the Natal Vicariate. The Mariannhill Missionaries (formerly Trappists, introduced by Bishop Jolivet, Q.M.I.) have seen their marvellously successful native missions erected into a separate Vicariate.

Besides the four Vicariates mentioned as under the care of the Oblates (following upon early divisions of the first Natal Vicariate), there is also the Prefecture Apostolic of Cimbebasia, or South-West Africa, where some German Oblates for a quarter of a century have been doing missionary work which has called forth the highest praise of churchmen and statesmen.

Since 1894, some Oblate Fathers and Brothers have been at work in Western Australia, at the request of the Right Rev. Dr. Gibney, Bishop of Perth, and the Most Rev.

Dr. Clune, C.S.S.R., the present Archbishop. Very worthy of mention are the names of Fathers Gaughran, O'Ryan, Hennessy, Cox, Callan, MacCallion, Smyth, Wheeler, Neville, Flynn, Casey, Hayes, Ahearne, and Thomas Ryan, the one who had most to do with the building of St Patrick's Church, Fremantle. The school at Beaconsfield was made to serve also as a church in the time of the Superiorship of Father Cox (now Bishop in Johannesburg), who also provided another school-chapel at East Fremantle, and brought a community of six Christian Brothers, under Brother Morgan, to undertake the work of education in Fremantle proper.

At the end of a book concerning missions in the Far North, we have been naturally led to speak of other foreign missions as well. But all these are, of course, for the most part dependent upon the men and means of Europe. The founder, Bishop de Mazenod, in his own lifetime, sent many missionaries abroad, and with his own hands consecrated half a dozen Oblate Bishops. The Oblate provinces at home, in France, Lorraine, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Italy, Spain, Great Britain and Ireland are prospering in their works, under God's blessing, but are ever seeking for increase in numbers and in material help, both for their own sake, and for the sake of the various foreign missions, which are always appealing to those at home. On every foreign shore, there is before the eye of Faith a perpetual vision as of some "Man of Macedonia" stretching out his hands, and saying, "Come over and help us: *messis multa, operarii pauci*."

The French priests are (as we have said) the pioneer missionaries of the Church in all parts of the world. But the French founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate was always very much alive to the important services that might be rendered by priests of English speech, especially in the various countries of the British Commonwealth. He himself was not without ties with England and Ireland. In his mature days, he was able to tell how in 1798 (when he was sixteen years of age), he met Nelson in the *salons* of the Russian Embassy at Naples. In the following year he met him at Palermo, and he never thought the less of the famous Admiral, as a sailor, through love of his own country, and of his uncle, Admiral Eugene de Mazenod. In the early days of his episcopate, Bishop de Mazenod sent Father Casimir Aubert to Ireland to prepare the way for an Oblate foundation there. Dr. Aubert (as he was always called in Ireland, being D.D.) was welcomed and

encouraged by Archbishop Murray of Dublin, and other prelates. O'Connell, who at that date, 1842, was (in his own expression to Disraeli) a *puissance*, asked Father Aubert for association with the new Order of Mary Immaculate. Father Aubert invested the Liberator in the Blue Scapular of the Immaculate Conception, before saying Mass for him in his house in Merrion Square, Dublin. One of the recruits whom Father Aubert brought to the Oblates was Father Robert Cooke, afterwards Provincial for many years, a renowned and holy missionary.

In the years of Bishop de Mazenod's episcopate, Marseilles was on the high road to Rome, and so he was visited by many ecclesiastics and others from England and Ireland. It is well known in particular that Primate Dixon, and Bishop James Walshe of Kildare and Leighlin, used to speak admiringly of the courtesy and dignity of the Bishop of Marseilles. Father Belaney, M.A., a Scottish convert, was another admirer, who used to speak of his visit to the Bishop in 1848, along with the Catholic Earl of Shrewsbury, to whom he was chaplain. A letter sent, through the hands of Father Cooke, to the second Oblate Superior General, by the late Earl of Denbigh, the convert, spoke of Mgr. de Mazenod as "*vrai père pour moi.*" In 1850, the Bishop was in London, from which he wrote a certain letter to Pope Pius IX. On the same occasion he went in an East End omnibus to Aldgate and Whitechapel, just the sort of place where he wished to see his Oblate sons preaching the Gospel to the poor. Before he died, he rejoiced to see with his own eyes several houses of his Order established in Great Britain and Ireland. In 1857, he was for the second (and last) time in England, at the opening of St Mary's Church, in Leeds, officiating along with Cardinal Wiseman and Dr. Manning, the preachers of the day. In that same year, in the famous wooden chapel at Inchicore, he wept with joy whilst giving Holy Communion for an hour to its builders and the other people of the locality. It was with much happy emotion too that he officiated in the Dublin Pro-Cathedral on the invitation of the Archbishop.

A year or two before Cardinal Wiseman's death, Father Cooke was treating with His Eminence concerning an Oblate foundation in London. Among other kind things [and perhaps mention of Dr. Manning's call at Marseilles, of which Mr. Shane Leslie tells us (*H. E. Manning*, pp. 503-4)], the Cardinal said that it was owing to Mgr. de Mazenod that he had been able to remain in Westminster. It is well known now that in 1850 Bishop Wiseman was saddened

by a "peremptory" letter, which opened before him the prospect of being "buried for ever in this life," and, as Cardinal, "bound in golden fetters" in Rome, although *he* was as fully persuaded as ever Newman was that "he had a work to do in England." Dr. Wiseman was writing in this sense as late as July 4, 1850. At that date Bishop de Mazenod was at Newton Heath (Manchester), and Mary Vale (Old Oscott), having been in London a few weeks earlier. He was in London again before the end of July. Pope Pius IX, in that summer, said one day, "Here is a letter from the Bishop of Marseilles, now in London, who puts it upon my conscience not to take Mgr. Wiseman away from his work in England." It was this appeal which induced the Pope to change his first intention. Whether the Vicar Apostolic in London had himself spoken on the subject to the Bishop of Marseilles we do not know. But the representative English Catholics whom the Bishop met at the London Oratory, or in the house of the Earl of Arundel in London, or at Grace Dieu, Everingham, Alton Towers, and Aldenham, are sure to have spoken strongly of the importance of allowing Dr. Wiseman to remain where he was. Besides, the zealous French Bishop was himself full of zeal for the cause. In the early hopeful days of the Oxford Movement, he had written Pastorals, prescribing for the conversion of England public devotions in which he himself took the leading part. It seems of interest to recall these various events now, at the close of a book which deals with a mission field in which priests of English speech have not as yet, to any considerable extent, imitated the self-sacrificing labours of the pioneer missionaries.

Not only priests, and not only Brothers and Nuns, but all the faithful, have it in their power to help Oblate mission work, at home and abroad, by joining the Association of Mary Immaculate, which affiliates them with the Order itself, and makes them sharers in its spiritual privileges. This Association was originally formed by the venerated founder of the Oblates in 1840. It is now an approved society in the Church, officially organized by authority of the Holy See, and enriched with Indulgences. Its supreme Director is the Superior General of the Oblates, 5, Via Vittorino da Feltre, Rome. The Director for Great Britain and Ireland is the Superior of the College of Mary Immaculate, Belcamp Hall, Raheny, Co. Dublin, who will gladly explain to inquirers the privileges and light conditions of enrolment in what might be called the Third Order of

